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"THE FATAL FOOTSTEP!" CRIED A CHORUS OF VOICES. "DEADWOOD DICK'S PROPHECY HAS BEEN FULFILLED!"

OR,

FATAL FOOTSTEPS.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK," "DENVER DOLL," "SIERRA SAM," "YREKA JIM," "DOCK DERRINGER," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

"I AM DEADWOOD DICK!"

OVERLOOKING a pleasant "pocket," surrounded by stupendous mountains, and on a rocky projection, a horseman sat gazing downward.

Before him lay a "city," as they call it in Western phrase.

This was, formerly, "Deadwood Dick's Diggings."

Below him lay a mountain indentation known

as a pocket—a small valley surrounded by mountains. A beautiful place it would have been but for some of the obliterating signs of the past.

Evidently the fire-fiend had made sad havoc with what was once a prosperous town, for ruins of cabins were visible on every hand indicating the work of a conflagration.

Still, out of this desolation, a mining-camp had again sprung up, and, if anything, larger than the original.

Not counting places devoted to business of varied character, a saw-mill had been introduced; consequently, the major part of the residences were made of either slabs or boards.

Perhaps a hundred buildings there were, including habitations, stores, saloons, ore-mills and a hotel, with some other concerns not worthy of mention.

Phoenix-like, "Deadwood Dick's Diggings" had risen from its ashes, and on its site now stood the flourishing town which bore the rather strange and eccentric name of Whiskyville.

Not a very moral or religious name to be sure, but some western camps and towns, I may say, are not named with a single thought of the great future.

This horseman, sitting his saddle and gazing below him, had a strange expression upon his countenance—an expression more revengeful than pleasing.

He was a man young in years, with a smoothly-shaven face, dark brown eyes and hair, and was of athletic build—decidedly a handsome fellow, one whom either sex must admire, at sight.

The horse he rode was a fine animal; the trappings were of the most substantial character.

And as this solitary horseman sat gazing down into the valley, which had once been his home, his thoughts thus took shape:

"My dream was true! The town has again risen, and, if anything, stronger than before. That which is rightfully mine, is still occupied by those who have no right to it.

"But, that shall not be! By law and miner's rights, I am entitled to possession of the pocket, and I will have it, if I have to fight for it, to the bitter end.

"True, those now in possession will dispute my rights and demands, and, no doubt, it would be worth my life to venture into the camp, but I will do so, and give them warning to vacate. Then, if they persist in remaining, it will be time for me to act. Here are the proofs and papers to establish my rights, and my rights I shall have, if I have to shed blood to get them!"

He drew a package of official-looking documents from his pocket, and gave them a brief examination.

"Yes, these documents attest my claim to the pocket, and are law in themselves. Their directions must be obeyed, or trouble will follow—graver trouble, even, than occurred in the Diggings only six short months ago!"

His eyes gleaming with resolution, he guided his horse into a precipitous path that led into the pocket below.

Half an hour later, he was in the little busy valley, and shortly after rode up the main street of the "ville."

His gaze scanned the face of every person he met, but he failed to recognize any one he had ever seen before.

This did not really surprise him, for he presumed that after the burning of the previous camp, there had been a general exodus of its well frightened population.

Up the main street of the town he fearlessly rode, attracting but little attention.

It was no unusual sight to see a horseman ride into the camp, hence little curiosity if any was manifested at his entrance.

Although well supplied with saloons, gambling and dance-houses—as a general thing the three were combined under one roof—Whiskyville possessed but two hotels, which bore the names of the Howling Hornet and the Grand Pacific.

Both were large, barn-like structures, and stood opposite each other, on their respective sides of the street.

The Howling Hornet had the prestige of catering to the larger patronage; but, both did an excellent business, owing to the daily influx of people into the camp.

It was before the Howling Hornet that Deadwood Dick drew rein.

It was a two-story affair, with a long piazza in front, upon which a number of people were lounging.

What caused the young detective-avenger to stop before that particular hotel, was the fact that, tacked to one of the awning posts, was a good sized tin sign, bearing in conspicuous letters the inscription:—

"HON. GRAHAM GOFF,
MAYOR."

Now this was the very party Dick desired to see, and therefore he drew rein, dismounted, and entered the hotel office, which was a commodious apartment, fairly well furnished.

Presiding behind the office counter, and something rarely seen in the mines, was a remarkably pretty young lady of some eighteen or nineteen years—a most shapely brunette, with dark hair and brilliant black eyes; a person at once attractive and charming of presence.

No other person was behind the counter, and, evidently, she had sole charge of the office.

Dick approached the counter, after a moment's hesitation, and a casual glance about the room.

"Does Mr. Goff, the mayor of the camp, put up at this house?" he inquired.

"Oh! yes, sir," was the pleasant answer. "That is my father, and he runs the hotel."

"Ah, indeed! I would like to see him. Is he about?"

"No, sir. He is at the office, at the Majestic Mine. He spends the day there generally."

"Can you direct me to his office?"

"Certainly. It is situated on the extreme southern side of the pocket, and is the only building there, with the exception of the stamp-mill. If you go up to the end of the street, and turn to your right, you cannot help but find the place."

"Thank you. I shall probably have no difficulty in finding it."

"Do you intend remaining in town to-night?"

"I am not decided as to that yet, but probably I shall."

"If so, we should be pleased to have you register here. You will find the accommodations much preferable to those across the street. I will give you a card."

Which she did, bearing the following imprint:

"THE HOWLING HORNET HOTEL,

Whiskyville.

HON. GRAHAM GOFF, Prop'r.

MISS GEORGIE GOFF, Clerk."

Thanking his pretty informant, Dick left the hotel, mounted his horse, and rode away.

He had no difficulty in finding the office of Whiskyville's mayor, which was an unpretentious little structure in the shadow of a big slab building, whose machinery proclaimed it to be an ore or "stamp"-mill, where minerals are crushed and separated from the rock.

Once more dismounting, he entered the office, to find himself in the presence of two men, who were ensconced in easy-chairs, engaged in conversation while they enjoyed their cigars.

One was a smoothly-shaven, rather portly personage of fifty years, whose face bore a brusque, decidedly business-like expression. He was neatly dressed.

The other was a burly, muscular man, with mustache, goatee, and a shock of sandy hair.

He had a keen, fierce pair of eyes, that were restless in their glance, and a general air of bravado.

"Is Mr. Goff, the mayor, in?" Dick asked, on entering.

"I am that person," the portly man replied.

"Did you wish to see me?"

"Yes, sir. I would like to have a talk with you, when at leisure."

"Be seated. I will talk with you as soon as I have a few words with Mr. Loggerhead."

Dick accordingly took a chair, while the mayor turned to the man with the goatee.

"No, sheriff," he said, "it is useless for you to try to convince me that this Red Rupert, as he styles himself, is any one outside this camp. The systematic manner in which these robberies have been perpetrated, go to show that the guilty one has a thorough knowledge of the camp. No stranger could, night after night, rob me, and the guests of my hotel, without being constantly around and on the alert for particulars!"

"Yet this same Red Rupert has stopped the stage, five miles from here, no less than five times, and secured the contents of the treasure-box, besides a large amount of other booty!" argued the sheriff.

"Even so, but on every occasion it has been when the largest consignments of money or gold were sent out of the camp. No stranger or person, not a hanger-on about the place, would have known of these shipments, except he had an accessory."

"He may have had an accessory?"

"Possibly. But I cannot bring myself to believe it. I believe this Red Rupert lives right here amongst us."

"But, whom do you suspect?"

"That's a question I do not know how to answer. I do not know whom to suspect."

"Nor I. I have spotted every stranger who came to the camp, but gained no clew, or anything to excite my suspicion. There are dozens of strange people coming to this camp daily, whom I have examined and spotted but none of them have shown themselves in the least suspicious."

"I have one idea to advance," the portly man went on, "and that is this: You have heard the story of the existence of a former town here; indeed, the evidences are yet plain. A man calling himself Deadwood Dick, Jr., was originally here, but was ousted by a party of stampedeers, who built up a camp. The ousted men swore vengeance, and executed it, for, after killing several people, he finally burnt the town. You have heard about it?"

"Well, I should smile! I was one of the stampeding party, and was engaged in the free fight that was followed by the burning of the camp!"

"Indeed! Did this Deadwood Dick escape?"

"I can't say positively but presume that he did. The confusion was so great that night that it is hard to say whether he escaped or not."

"Very likely he did, for 'tis said he has the lives of a cat. In case he did escape, may not he be this Red Rupert?"

"It is possible, though hardly probable," the sheriff said, thoughtfully.

"And why not probable? This Deadwood Dick, it appears, placed his curse upon this town, and if he is still alive he no doubt still cherishes a desire for revenge. He is a desperate devil, from what I can learn, and absolutely fearless, and his word or oath is considered unimpeachable. If he has a grudge against those who he claims are usurping his rights—that, I believe, was his plea before—it would not be surprising that he should seek to continue his vengeful attacks!"

"Perhaps your theory is the correct one, boss, but there's nothing certain about it. When this 'ere Deadwood Dick was here before, he was in disguise, it seems, and went under the name of Doctor Death-Grip. I can't say as I ever see'd him in his nateral colors. So, how d'ye suppose I'd know him, now, even ef he is this Red Rupert?"

"Well, by careful inquiry, you might find some one who would know him."

"I will save you the trouble of any unnecessary inquiry, gentlemen," Dick said, rising, "for I am Deadwood Dick, but not Red Rupert, of whom I have heard you make mention!"

CHAPTER II.

DEADWOOD DICK'S WARNING.

HAD a thunderbolt descended into the little shanty office it could scarcely have created more consternation than did the sudden announcement of the young prince of Western detectives.

So sudden had been his identification of himself, that it nearly took away the breath of the two men who, a moment before, had been talking about him.

He stood proudly erect, with his arms folded across his breast; his pose was Apollo-like, and his whole appearance decidedly striking and handsome.

He had made no attempt to draw a weapon, but a faint smile of contempt wreathed his lips.

It was several seconds ere either Graham Goff or the sheriff could recover their composure; then the former said:

"So you're Deadwood Dick, eh?"

"I am—Deadwood Dick, Junior. The original of that name is long since dead."

"You are the fellow who claims to own this pocket?"

"The very same!"

"And you have the presumption to return to this camp and admit that?"

"Exactly! All the land in this pocket belongs to me, having been properly conveyed to me by the Government for services rendered. I have papers to prove my claim!"

"Humph! A fig for your papers, sir," Goff replied. "What do we care for them! Possession is always two points of the law, without fail, and I allow we have got possession, beyond the shadow of a doubt, eh, sheriff?"

"Well, I should smile, and this young cuss has run his neck into a noose, in coming back here, for he is a murderer and an outlaw, an' et's my official duty to arrest him. He killed off a number of people in the previous camp, besides firin' the town, an' ef that ain't sufficient cause for his arrest I'd like to know the reason why."

"Of course he must be arrested!" Graham Goff declared. "We cannot afford such a desperate character roaming around loose, and thereby imperil the lives of our friends and families. Besides, there is little doubt in my mind but what this fellow is the so-styled Red Rupert who has been systematically robbing me and others!"

"I am not Red Rupert, nor have I ever heard of any one of that name," Dick replied. "I am, however, Deadwood Dick, Junior, and I have come here to warn you, one and all, to leave this at once and for good, or a worse fate shall greet you than rewarded the former usurpers of my rights. If my warning is unheeded, this time, I shall not strike at a few persons, but at all, and they shall feel the weight of my just vengeance! You have heard me, mister self-styled mayor, and believe me, you will find it worth your while to heed me!"

Graham Goff smiled in contempt.

"You're a fool!" he retorted scornfully, "to for an instant cherish the idea that you could frighten us, or drive us out of this pocket. We have our rights here, and shall stay, in spite of you, man, or devil. And as you have a hard reputation, and have even now threatened us, it is our duty to protect ourselves by arresting you. Sheriff, do your duty!"

Loggerhead accordingly arose, and swelled up as if he were a personage of vast importance.

"Young man," he said, with a pompous air, "I arrest you in the name of the law, for threatening to do injury to the residents of this town, and also for past crimes of murder and general outlawry. I shall have to put the cuffs on you, and lock you up!" and drawing a pair of handcuffs from his pocket, he advanced toward the young claimant.

But, if he expected the Prince of the West to surrender unconditionally, he reckoned without his host.

Dick had kept his arms folded until now, when they suddenly unfolded, and a pair of revolvers appeared in his grasp—a formidable pair of silver-plated weapons, that looked deadly enough in his powerful grip.

As a consequence, Levi Loggerhead paused, and stared in blank dismay at the man whom he had expected to take an easy prisoner.

"Come on!" Dick challenged coolly. "If you've any idea you can put the bracelets upon me, you are perfectly welcome to try!"

"Put down them barkers!" Loggerhead growled, "or it will be the worse for you."

"Nary a put! I ain't one of that kind, I'll have you know. I ain't surrendering to no such a sucker as you. So get back to your chair, instant, or I'll put daylight through you before you have time to say Jack Robinson! Git! now!"

And Loggerhead did "git" without loss of time.

"I'll git even with you to-morrow, you bet!" he growled, "and don't you forget it! I ain't the kind of a hairpin to be bluffed down by a young monkey like you. I'll either land you in jail, or I'll fit you fer a funeral!"

Dick laughed sarcastically.

"All right!" he replied. "I'm not afraid of you, and if you haven't quit this town by to-morrow sunset, I'll guarantee you'll need a coffin more than I."

Then, turning to Graham Goff, he continued: "As for you, sir, I understand you enjoy the distinction of being the mayor, and consequently the ruler of this camp. To you, therefore, I have a few words to say. I am the owner of this pocket and all the mineral wealth it contains, and I intend to have my rights, even if I have to shed blood to obtain them. The record of the past shall be a guarantee of the future!"

"I hereby warn you to notify the present residents of this camp to pull up stakes and evacuate at once, and forever, and to return not, at the peril of their lives. Such return will result in death. You and your people have until sunset to-morrow night to pack up your traps and vamoze! All who remain here after sunset to-morrow night will certainly feel the weight of my vengeance. So sure as there is a sky above me, I will fight to the bitter end but what I will have possession of that which is rightfully mine. So beware! Remain here after sunset to-morrow night at the peril of your lives!"

"Bah! We will not leave the pocket for you, or a hundred like you—nay! nor a thousand. And, let me tell you, sir, that if you do not leave the town at once, you'll be strung up without quarter. I'll take the responsibility, personally, of seeing to the matter. There is no doubt in my mind but what you are Red Rupert, the road-agent! We have a Vigilance Committee

already organized, and if you refuse to leave immediately, you will surely fall into their hands! So, go!"

"Yes! I will go!" Dick replied, "but shall not go far. If you value your life, and the lives of your people, you will be out of this gulch ere the sun sets to-morrow night! Good-day!" and thrusting his revolvers into his belt, the young chief of Western detectives turned and left the office, leaving the mayor and the sheriff staring each other blankly in the face, one trying, evidently, to divine the opinion of the other.

CHAPTER III.

FLOY FYDELL, AND A HOWLING MOB.

LIKE most mining towns, Whiskyville had a great many varieties of business enterprises, and among others was a clothing and gents' furnishing store, which, strange to say, was conducted by a young woman, or more properly speaking, a girl, for she was scarce more than seventeen, if indeed that.

A most beautiful creature she was, with a *petite*, prettily-molded figure, and a fairy-like face, sparkling brown eyes, and a wealth of brown hair.

There were a number of pretty girls in the camp, but none of them half so pretty or charming as Floy Fyde, proprietor of the Chicago Clothing House, where everything wearable was to be found, from a hat to a pair of boots or shoes—from a full suit to a collar-button.

Miss Fyde did not confine herself to the clothing business, either. She kept a stock of weapons, ammunition, and sporting articles, besides which, a tin sign upon the awning-post in front of her store bore this legend:

"MISS FLOY FYDELL,

Clairvoyant.

Reads Past, Present and Future—Foretells Impending Disaster—Recovers Lost Friends—Points Out the Way to Fortune.

FEE, FIVE DOLLARS!"

Few, if any of the Whiskyvillians had tested Miss Fyde's powers of clairvoyance, for a general prejudice existed that it was all a humbug.

But this fact did not detract from her popularity. Hers was the only clothing establishment in the camp, and her store was much frequented—many of her patrons making purchases simply because they reveled in bliss when they got a smile from her pretty lips.

Admirers she had by the score, and as many of the townspeople were young men, and not a few well-to-do and good-looking, the rivalry between them was considerable, and in many instances, bitter.

Among the latter class were two dashing young fellows, named respectively, Giles Goff and Jerry Justice.

The former was the son of Whiskyville's portly mayor, while the latter was superintendent of the Majestic Mine, owned by the mayor.

Both were young men in the twenties, good-looking, and dashing of appearance, but, while Jerry was shrewd, energetic and wide-awake to business, Giles was idle, dissipated, and addicted to gambling.

Work he would not, for when not lucky enough to earn what money he needed at the gaming-table, he always made it a point to approach his sister, of the Howling Hornet Hotel, and never went away empty-handed. Brother and sister "stood in together," far more harmoniously than brothers and sisters usually do; while, on the other hand, the father and his children often wrangled together.

Graham Goff had long since put his foot down against catering to his son's extravagances, although he was always ready to do him favors in any other way.

Jerry Justice and Giles Goff had never been on good terms, owing to the rivalry between them for the affection of pretty Floy Fyde, and on one occasion, for an insult, Jerry had administered to young Goff a severe thrashing in public.

That Floy Fyde cared nothing in particular for either of the young men she had given them to understand, but it seemed to make no difference to them, for both were the more determined to win her.

People were rather inclined to believe, however, that Floy secretly fancied the young superintendent of the mine, who was gradually acquiring a nice little sum of money, the result of careful savings.

There was another young lady who was known to be captivated with handsome Jerry Justice, and she was none other than the pretty

clerk of the Howling Hornet Hotel, Miss Georgie Goff.

That she was wildly infatuated with the dashing superintendent, was a matter of fact, but in return he did not appear to reciprocate her affection in the least.

Jerry was quite popular among a certain class of the people, the better element, but among the rougher class he was not so popular, while with these, Giles Goff was a sort of favorite and ruler.

He was free in spending his money upon them for liquor, and in return they stuck to him literally like paper on the wall.

Thus it was that the Whiskyvillians were divided into two factions.

On several occasions, Giles Goff had sought his father and tried to get him to remove young Justice from the superintendency of the Majestic, but in each instance he had failed, for, while the mayor did not refuse outright, he always put his son off with "I'll hold the matter under consideration."

And so he did, only that he never reported what his "consideration" was, much to the chagrin of his undutiful son.

As before stated, Floy Fyde had a fine business with her store, and was making money rapidly, so that she was a catch worth securing, independent of her beauty.

That evening, subsequent to his interview with Graham Goff, Deadwood Dick chanced to be in need of some few articles of furnishing-goods, and so dropped into the Chicago Clothing House to make his purchases.

To say that he found an uncommonly bright and pretty young lady the sole attendant and evident manageress, would be quite true.

Miss Fyde also had another customer, who was examining some clothing, a goodly stock of which she kept.

While he was thus engaged, she stepped along to where Dick had paused at the counter.

"Is there anything I can do for you, sir?" she inquired.

"I would like to see some silk handkerchiefs," Dick replied politely; "also some gentleman's hose."

"Certainly, sir. I have a very nice stock of both."

She placed several boxes of handkerchiefs upon the counter, and a like array of hose-boxes for Dick to select from.

"Very pleasant weather we are having," she observed, while Dick was making his selections.

"Delightful! It is too nice to remain indoors."

"Indeed it is! I often wish I were not penned up here, in the store, so that I could have more liberty."

"You are not all alone, I trust?"

"Oh! yes, indeed. Beyond a few acquaintances, I am all alone in the world."

"You are unfortunate. I should suppose you would be lonely. But then, no doubt, your business keeps your mind occupied."

"Yes, it does. I have but little chance to think of aught else."

"You seem to have plenty of time to chin with utter strangers!" spoke up Giles Goff, who had been hauling over the goods before him, without the least idea of buying anything. "I believe I was the first customer to be waited upon, Miss Fyde!"

"When you have selected what you intend to purchase I will wait upon you," Floy returned, haughtily, while her cheeks flushed crimson. "Do you find anything to suit you, sir?"—this to Dick.

"Yes. You may wrap me up this half-dozen handkerchiefs, and this half-dozen pair of hose, please," Dick replied. "What will be the charge?"

"The handkerchiefs will be six dollars and the hose three—nine dollars, all told. Will there be anything else?"

"Not to-night, I guess. Here is a ten-dollar bill. Never mind the change."

"Thank you, but I must insist on returning the change," and she laid a silver dollar on the counter.

"Of course you'll give back the change," cried Giles Goff, blustering up, "and if the chap offers to insult you again just let me know and I'll punch his head for him!" and the mayor's son glared fiercely at the stranger.

"Excuse me, miss," Dick said, apologetically, "for I meant no insult, but considered the articles well worth ten dollars; hence my offer."

"You are perfectly excusable," Floy returned. "I did not deem the offer an insult or I should have told you so. All I want, in my dealings, is a fair profit."

"Thank you. And as for you, sir?" turning

to young Goff, "when you come to talk about punching heads, you'd better look sharp you don't get your thick head punched. I'm not in the habit of having outsiders meddling in my affairs, much less a chap of your caliber!"

"Indeed! You talk as though you were somebody. You vagabond! for a cent I'd flatten your nose all over your face!"

Dick thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Well, here is a cent. Now, show us what you can do, sonny," and he flipped the copper through the air so skillfully that it struck Goff upon the nose.

With a howl the fellow sprung forward and aimed a savage blow at Dick, which was readily parried, while a counter stroke caught Goff between the eyes. He reeled backward and nearly fell.

By this time Floy Fydell had hastened from behind the counter, and stepped between the two.

"Gentlemen, you must not fight here," she protested. "My place bears a respectable name, and I cannot afford to have it disgraced."

"Nor shall it be," Dick said, promptly. "I am sorry I was forced to strike the fellow, in self-defense. I will not give him further chance to pick a quarrel with me here," and turning, he left the store.

As he had expected, no attempt was made to follow him, for although he was notorious for bluster, Giles was an arrant coward at heart.

Dick went to the Grand Pacific, where he had registered, and after obtaining his supper he took a seat upon the piazza to enjoy a cigar.

The guests of the Grand Pacific were, if anything, a more select class than those of the Howling Hornet, which stood directly across the street, and, as we have said, catered to a rougher element.

At night, life in Whiskyville was at its height.

The streets swarmed with people, the stores and saloons did a rushing trade, and the pulse of animation beat quick and strong everywhere where liquor or cards were at command.

In the Howling Hornet gaming-saloon money changed hands every moment—the poor man and the rich alike courting the game of chance with avidity.

The saloon and gaming department of the Hornet was a large apartment, occupied in the front by the bar, and in the rear by the tables whereon the games of chance were played.

The gaming department was in the charge of an expert gambler called Gila George, who, Dame Rumor said was engaged to Georgie Goff.

Whether there was any truth in the report or not, probably no one knew, but at any rate such was the gossip.

Sitting on the piazza and watching the crowd that eddied in and out of the Hornet saloon, Dick came to the conclusion that the place must do a rushing business; but he had no inclination to visit it yet awhile.

After finishing a couple of cigars, and feeling fatigued, he sought his room and retired for the night.

He did not anticipate any hostile demonstration against him immediately, and so no thought of danger disturbed his slumber during the first part of the night.

Shortly after midnight, however, there was a knocking on his door.

He instantly sat up in bed.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"It's me, the proprietor!" was the reply.

The proprietor of the Grand Pacific, Joe Garry by name, was a genial young fellow, only slightly Dick's senior.

"What do you want?" Dick demanded, suspicious that trouble was brewing.

"Open the door!" was the reply. "I've something important to tell you."

"Are you alone?"

"There is one other person with me."

"Who?"

"Miss Fydell!"

Dick reflected a moment, and then said:

"Wait until I dress."

"All right. Hurry up."

Dick accordingly sprung out of bed, lighted the lamp, and made a hasty toilet; then he unlocked the door and Garry and Floy Fydell entered the room, after which Dick closed the door and handed them chairs.

"Be seated," he said, his face betraying the surprise he felt.

"Thank you," Garry replied. "I presume you are surprised at this late, or, more properly, this early call?"

"Well, yes, I must admit that I am," Dick replied, good-naturedly. "For what reason am I thus honored?"

"I will explain. This young lady is Miss Fydell, our local clothing merchant."

"I believe we have met once before," and Dick gracefully acknowledged the introduction.

"Ah! Just so. Well, about an hour ago, Miss Fydell came to me and made a somewhat startling revelation. From what she tells me, you register as Richard Bristol although you also answer to the name of Deadwood Dick?"

"Miss Fydell has not misinformed you," Dick replied, coolly. "I am sometimes called Deadwood Dick—or rather, Deadwood Dick, Junior, for the original Deadwood Dick, as you know, is dead."

"It appears that you lay claim to this pocket?"

"I do. I have the papers to prove that I am the legal and only owner."

"You caused the destruction of the town that formerly occupied the site of the present one?"

"Not directly. I placed my curse upon the town because I was sent to what seemed an almost certain death by two of the stampedes, who were instrumental in depriving me of my rights and property. The night of the conflagration, we had a free fight in the Cocktail Saloon, a lamp exploded, and the shebang took fire. A stiff wind was blowing, and the flames communicated to other buildings, and ere day-dawn the place was in ruins."

"Probably I should never have returned here only I learned that another camp had sprung up, and I had sworn that no town should exist upon my property without my consent. The Government assigned me this tract of territory for special detective services, and it is mine, and I will fight for it to the bitter end!" and Deadwood Dick looked as handsome as an Apollo as he stood with folded arms, his eyes sparkling with animation and resolution.

"And, I understand," continued Garry, "that you have come back here, with the avowed intention of breaking up this camp?"

"That depends altogether on circumstances. I visited your local mayor, to-day, introduced myself, and notified him that I was the individual owner of this pocket. I further notified him that I intended to possess it, and that I gave him and the people of the camp to vacate the pocket before to-morrow's sunset, and never to return, except at the peril of their lives. Also, that those who persisted in remaining, would become subjects of my vengeance!"

"So I understand. And you mean what you said, I presume?"

"Without the shadow of a doubt. I am not the sort of a man who is given over to idle boasting. I have authorized your chief magistrate to give timely warning to his people. If he neglects to do so, it is his fault, not mine!"

"Do you mean to say that you can fight a populace like this, single-handed?"

"Yes, I will make this camp look sicker than it did before, unless this camp is vacated before to-morrow evening."

"I suppose that includes the establishment of myself, and that of Miss Fydell?"

"Not necessarily so. My edict is more especially directed toward those who are engaged in robbing me of the mineral resources which are mine. I have no particular opposition toward the other business interests, but the minerals in this pocket, are mine. I intend to rule here, as owner, and master, and control the mining interests."

"I have not yet issued my manifesto, but when I do, those engaged in mining will understand that I am owner and master here, and they can either consider me so, and work for me, or, if they refuse, a reign of terror for them will follow. That's all need be said on the subject."

"Not quite," Garry observed. "Perhaps you are not aware that you are in deadly peril?"

"Well, no; I am not aware of anything of the kind."

"But, you are, nevertheless. Within an hour's time, and no doubt in less than half that time, this hotel will be surrounded by a howling mob, bent upon your destruction. Mayor Goff and Sheriff Levi Loggerhead have circulated the news of your arrival, together with your threat, and they, aided by the local Vigilance Committee have aroused the people, and everywhere the greatest excitement prevails."

"It is know you are stopping here, and that you propose to remain here over night. If it were known that I had given you any warning of what was going to happen, they would rend me limb from limb."

"A mob is rapidly forming, and it is their intention to surround the hotel, cut off your escape, and then capture and lynch you. I

knew nothing of this until informed by Miss Fydell, who chanced to overhear the plan, and asked my intervention in your behalf!"

Dick flashed a grateful glance toward Floy, and said:

"This is an unexpected favor, Miss Fydell, I assure you, and you have my sincere thanks for your interest in my behalf."

"I could not bear to see a gentleman like you become the victim of a howling mob, without giving you timely warning," was Floy's modest reply.

"There's another thing against you, but which I do not believe, as I am assured by Miss Floy of its falsity. You see, Miss Fydell is a universal favorite in the camp, and there isn't a man who doesn't respect and admire her."

"I've no doubt of that," Dick observed.

"Of course not. But Giles Goff, the mayor's son, has circulated the report about town that you entered her store during the evening, and, after making a purchase, grossly insulted her."

"There's not a word of truth in it," Floy spoke up, impulsively. "The gentleman did not insult me, but was insulted by Goff, and Goff was promptly knocked down, which served him right."

"Miss Fydell's testimony ought to be sufficient, eh?" Dick observed. "If I insulted the young lady, it was without any intention of doing so. I purchased a bill of goods of her for nine dollars, and giving her a ten-dollar note, told her to keep the change—for I considered I was getting the goods cheap enough at ten. I see no insult about that."

"Nor I. But the crowd don't view it in that light, and the vengeful feeling is running high, mark my word. It is furthermore believed that you are a chap known as Red Rupert, who has been committing numerous robberies in the camp, and upon the stage trail, and, one thing is certain—if the crowd gets hold of you, you're a goner, as sure as B follows A. Your only hope is to make your escape at once."

Dick smiled, calmly.

At the same time Floy Fydell sprung to her feet excitedly.

"It is too late!" she cried, turning pale. "Listen!"

They did listen, and what they heard was not calculated to give them a feeling of comfort or confidence.

Outside the hotel there had suddenly burst upon the night air an ominous sound, which every second increased in significance and volume—the yells, shrieks, groans and catcalls of an assembling mob.

"They are surrounding the hotel!" Joe Garry said, in a hushed voice. "What is to be done?"

"There is but one thing," Dick replied. "Does Miss Fydell stop here?"

"Yes."

"Then send her to her room. You go downstairs. If a demand is made for me, show 'em to my room. They'll not find me. Keep 'em out of the hotel as long as possible!"

CHAPTER IV.

A DISGUISE THAT DIDN'T WORK.

ACCORDING to the lodger's directions Joe Garry and Floy Fydell immediately left the room, while Dick at once commenced to disguise himself.

Luckily he had brought his saddle-bags with him, to his room, and in them had several complete disguises—among others that of a down-east Yankee.

In five minutes time, he had so changed his appearance that the shrewdest detective would not have recognized him. He looked a veritable Vermonter to perfection.

So far, so good; but—what was he to do with the saddle-bags?

He cast about him for a place to secrete them, all the while the riotous roar of the mob about the hotel growing louder and louder.

Something must be done, and that too, immediately.

There was a fireplace in the room, and the rough stone slab which was its hearth, was easily pried up. On prying it up, he found a cavity, deposited his bags therein, and let the stone fall back to its place.

It was a safe cache.

Dick then left and locked his room, and descended to the hotel office, where he found a number of the guests collected, who had been aroused by the racket of the riotous crowd outside.

Dick approached the office counter, behind which Joe Garry presided, and said, in an undertone:

"I would like to get a different room for the

night. The one I had didn't quite suit me. By the way, I believe I didn't register."

Garry flashed him an inquiring glance, and then said, in a whisper:

"Good! excellent! I'll give you \$2. Please register, sir."

Dick did register, and the name he indited upon the book, was:

"PHILANDER FLUKE,
"Brattleboro, Vt."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Fluke," Garry said, putting out his hand, after a glance at the signature. "Do you intend to stay long with us, sir?"

"Waal, I can't egzactly say as ter that, but mebbe I'll stay a few days. Ye see, I'm agent fer ther Sure-Cure Cough Medicine, an' ef I kin find sale for et heer, I may tarry some time. Fer any one thet's got a cold, cough, catarrh or cunsumption, the Sure Cure aire the best medicine on ther face of the 'arth. Say, yer don't keep no good hum-made hard cider round these premises, do yer?"

"No, nothing but whisky and ale."

"Humph. Thunderin' town this is! I say, what's ther mass-meetin' outside, Republican or Democrat? Or is it election?"

"I allow some one's going to be elected!" Garry replied, dryly. "Anything I can do for you, Mr. Goff?" for the Mayor of Whiskyville had entered and stood beside the counter, during the conversation between Garry and Philander Fluke.

"Yes, there is something you can do for me," the mayor said, in an impressive tone. "You have a man registered here, I believe, who styles himself Deadwood Dick?"

Garry referred to the register and shook his head.

"No one by that name," he said.

"Richard Bristol, then?"

"Yes, there is such a party as that registered."

"Is he in his room?"

Garry turned to the key-rack.

"I think he is, unless he has gone out without leaving his key at the office."

"Please see if he is in his room, and if so, tell him there is an old acquaintance here who wishes to see him."

Accordingly, Garry called a servant, gave him a pass key, and the directions as suggested by the mayor.

The servant, a Chinaman, soon returned, his peculiar visage wreathed with gracious smiles.

"Me no tellee him," he said. "He nottee in room. Been to bedee—gottee up an' gonee out!"

Graham Goff uttered an oath.

"I don't believe this!" he cried. "Wait till I call the sheriff, and then you must show us through the house, Garry! We want this fellow. He's an outlaw!"

"Certainly," Garry replied, graciously. "Anything to accommodate you, mayor."

Levi Loggerhead was called, and then the trio started on a trip through the hotel, Joe Garry in the lead.

Outside remained the mob, hooting and howling like mad; but none of them ventured to enter the hotel, until they should receive orders from the mayor.

As for Philander Fluke, he went over and sat down on one of the settees that ran along one side of the room.

At his right sat a sprucely-dressed young fellow, with a graceful mustache and an expression and complexion singularly feminine, as was, indeed, the contour of his figure.

In his disguise of Philander Fluke, Dick paid little or no attention to this stranger, until a soft, gloved hand was laid upon his, and a low voice said:

"I know you, Mr. Deadwood Dick, despite your disguise!"

Naturally, the words, uttered in a low, significant tone, gave Dick a start and he turned and surveyed his accoster keenly.

"Who in thunderation aire you, an' what d'ye mean?" he demanded, still clinging to his Yankee nasal twang.

"Oh! you can't pull wool over my eyes," the other replied, promptly. "I penetrated your disguise the moment you entered the office. You are the fellow, Deadwood Dick, what the mob is howlin' for. As to who I am, that depends. Under certain circumstances I am your friend; under others, I am your enemy. Which would you rather have?"

"I don't know that I have any particular choice, sir!" was Dick's undaunted reply. "I don't know as I crave either."

"Indeed? Strikes me you are mighty independent for one whose life is in jeopardy!" the

dapper little stranger said, with a perceptible sneer.

"Perhaps I am," was Dick's retort. "We people up in Vermont aire generally up to snuff, anyhow."

"Let up on that Yankee bizness," the other said, impatiently. "It won't work on me, for a cent. You're no more from Vermont than I am. Do you know that a word from me would place you at the mercy of the mob, outside?"

"Bah!"

"I mean what I say; you are at my mercy, and were I to point you out as being Deadwood Dick, your life would not be worth a straw. The mob would overpower you, cool man and desperate fighter though you are, and you would be dragged forth and strung up, without mercy!"

Dick knew there was truth in this statement, and gave the dandy another searching glance.

"What is your object in telling me all this?" he demanded.

"I have an object, of course," was the reply.

"I command a party of fellows called the Red Rangers, and have an opening for just such a chap as you are, to take active command. I want you to join me, and I will get you out of this scrape, and give you an opportunity to corral a pile of money, besides commanding an invincible body of men, whom you can utilize to assist you in obtaining vengeance against this town!"

"Ah!" Dick said, reflectively. "So you are Red Rupert, the road-agent, are you?"

"I did not say anything of the kind, nor do I admit anything of the kind," was the reply.

"All I have to say is this: If you will join my company of ranger's, I will guarantee you a free-and-easy life, good profits, and the command of as fine a body of men as ever sat a saddle. Your principal duty will be to attend to the stages, and see that they are properly worked!"

"You evidently take me for a road-agent."

"You have been one, if report be true!"

"However that may be, I am not, now, and so cannot join your outlaws!"

"You must join them!"

"Indeed! You don't say so! Why you astonish me. I was not aware that there was anything compulsory about the matter!"

"But, you will find there is. If you refuse to become a member of my band, I will betray you to the mob!"

"Do it. I defy you. The people shall then know that I am a U. S. Government detective, and that you are the burglar and stage-robber, Red Rupert. Go ahead, if you like. You will have to tackle some one else, if you want to frighten any one. I'm not on the frighten, myself."

"But, think! Death stares you in the face. Will you give up your life for sake of conscientious scruples altogether out of place here?"

"If necessary, yes. Many's the time I have met death, face to face, and I'm not afraid to meet it again. Go ahead and do your worst. I'm not in the road-agent business."

"You'd prefer my enmity to my friendship, then?"

"As I told you once before, I have no choice; I'd as lief have one as the other."

"Then it shall be my enmity, though I should prefer that we be on friendly terms, for I have taken a liking to you. However, if you refuse to become a member of my band I must be your enemy!"

"As you like. I'm not particular!" was Dick's reply.

The dandy arose and sauntered to another part of the room, from whence, when he thought he was unnoticed, he went up-stairs.

CHAPTER V.

LYNCHED.

DEADWOOD DICK sat for some moments, in deliberation over what had just transpired.

"So, that is Red Rupert, eh?" he soliloquized.

"Well, well! Rather a dainty specimen of humanity, I should say, to be a road-agent. Rather a feminine-looking person, too. So I am to consider Red Rupert my enemy, eh?—simply because of my refusal to become a member of his gang? Well, so be it. I had as lief fight all as one. Pretty Floyd Fydell, and the genial, whole-souled proprietor of this place alone shall escape."

Outside, the mob continued to howl and yell, and raise a perfect pandemonium.

Up-stairs, the sheriff, the mayor, and Garry were making a tour of the various rooms.

Down-stairs, Philander Fluke arose, and wandered about the office; bought a cigar, and a

drink; at the office he once more tackled the sub-clerk.

"Why, howdy ye do, friend? Didn't you uster belong up in Brattleboro', Vermont? Seems to me I uster know yer?"

"I think not. I never associated with any of your sort," replied the astute Adonis of the bar, who had graduated at his profession, in an eastern city. "You're off your base."

"Waal, now, lookee heer!" vociferated Philander, with evident rising dudgeon. "I want yer ter understand that my base aire as solid an' firm as adamant. An', ef ye don't believe it, ye kin hev a sample of ther goods right away off, quick, and ye can bet ther' ain't no flies on me!"

"You're a tramp! You're no good!" returned the bartender-clerk—for he officiated in both positions. "You had better go soak your head and your feet, and then maybe you will know something."

"Both my feet and my head are well," Dick replied, "and if you have any doubts about the matter you are at liberty to investigate, providing you can!"

"Oh, chestnuts! You old Yankee tramp, if you give me any more of your guff I'll jump over the bar and paralyze you!" blustered the bartender.

"Supposing you come now," proposed Dick, and reaching quickly over the bar, he seized the dispenser under the arm-pits, lifted him bodily over the counter, and threw him sprawling on the floor.

The excitement immediately became intense. Barber, the bartender, lay paralyzed on the floor—dazed, rather. The fall had knocked the breath and senses out of him.

The few people who had congregated in the bar-room stood amazed at the sudden muscular exhibition of Philander Fluke, who, judging by his make-up, was not a man of any great physical strength.

As for Philander, he folded his arms calmly across his breast and took in the scene, a quiet smile resting upon his thoroughly Yankee countenance.

At this juncture, four persons came down the winding stairs that led to the bar-room floor. They were Mayor Goff, Sheriff Loggerhead, Joe Garry and the dandy who had made the proposals to Deadwood Dick.

As soon as they reached the foot of the stairs, the latter pointed his finger toward the pseudo-Yankee, and cried out:

"That's the man—that is Deadwood Dick! Seize him!"

Instantly a scene of wildest confusion ensued. Levi Loggerhead rushed forward with the evident intention of grappling with his man, but before he had taken half a dozen leaps one of Dick's revolvers flashed, and Whiskyville's sheriff fell groveling in the dust that covered the bar-room floor.

In the mean time, Mayor Goff had opened the door and given the signal for the mob to come to the rescue.

Then followed such a scene as no pen can adequately describe. Pistol-shots, the clash of knives, the groans of the wounded and dying, and the curses of those engaged in combat—all blended with the screeching mob who held high carnival without.

For a few minutes this indiscriminate melee continued; then, of a sudden, it stopped.

Carrying between them an apparently inanimate body, a dozen men filed out of the saloon into the pocket, into which the moon threw down a most effulgent light—a light that made the procession look weird and spectral.

The man carried between these dozen, was no other than Deadwood Dick, Jr.

The disguise had been torn from his face, and he was recognized by more than one who had seen the face before, undisguised.

Insensible, bleeding from a dozen wounds, and powerless, the Detective Prince of the West was borne along, until a large tree with strong and out-reaching branches was found, the largest of the few in the pocket.

Here he was laid upon the ground, and the curious mob surrounded him.

A ruffian was dispatched for a lariat and soon returned with one, which was long enough and strong enough to hang a dozen men.

A noose was made, and shirred about Deadwood Dick's neck, then the other end was thrown over a stout branch of the tree, and seized by eager hands.

By this time Dick Bristol had recovered his senses, and was lifted to his feet.

His hands were bound behind his back and he was powerless.

Blood dripped from his wounds, and he was rather a ghastly looking spectacle.

As soon as he was well balanced on his feet, Mayor Goff stepped forward, and addressed him:

"Richard Bristol!" he said, in an impressive tone, "are you aware of what is about to happen?"

"I presume I might be able to form an opinion!" was the reply. "Looks rather like a lynch picnic."

"You are right. You are about to be hanged by the neck until you are dead. You came to our town with the avowed intention of destroying both it and its people, and as we can not tolerate such a murderous design, we have concluded to take the law into our own hands, and make a summary disposal of you. In doing this we shall be committing no crime, but are simply protecting the interests of the people. Have you anything to say, before you are lynched?"

"Nothing more than that even though you hang me, I shall return to life, to wreak vengeance upon you," was the unflinching answer. "I am the owner of these diggings, and no man engaged in mining, or in any way connected with mining, shall ever prosper here!"

The mayor smiled, and turned to the sheriff. "Do your duty, Loggerhead!" he ordered. "Ready! boys!" directed the sheriff. "One! two! three! Pull!"

The men who manned the rope, did pull, and Deadwood Dick Junior was drawn into mid-air, and the lariat fastened about the trunk of the tree.

Then, as the body swayed to and fro, in the moonlight, the crowd turned away, and struck a bee-line for the nearest saloons, to "liquor up" in celebration of the first lynching bee the camp had ever known.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MIDNIGHT MAIL ROBBER.

WE pass over a week's time ere we once more look down into Whiskyville.

The place seems to be enjoying the even tenor of its existence, and we mark no notable changes, except that the camp has considerably increased in size and importance, and the bustle on the main street somewhat suggestive of a holiday.

Teams, attached to dump-carts, pass to and fro across the gulch, from the mouth of the Majestic Mine to the stamp-mill, hauling ore, where all day long the grinding of ponderous machinery creates a monotonous roar, as it separates golden wealth from worthless rock.

A few placer claims are being worked on the pocket bottom, and a second shaft is being constructed, but in the former instance no considerable gold is being washed out.

The Majestic is the mine of the pocket, and a great source of profit to its owner, Graham Goff, and giving employment to upward of three hundred men.

With increasing rotundity and increasing riches, the mayor sits in his office and gathers in the wealth, both mineral and manufactured, with a benign smile of satisfaction upon his florid countenance.

"What care I for the troubles of others, as long as I am feathering my nest?" he says. "I'm doing well, and it's always well to let well enough alone."

It is dark when we once more visit the town. All the business places are closed, except the hotels and saloons, whose constant custom demand that they keep open all night.

The post-office, a new structure, was closed to the public, but in the little apartment back of the tiers of pigeon-holes, a dim light was burning, and a man was busily engaged in sorting a pile of letters.

That he was not the postmaster or an employee of the post-office was evidenced by the fact that he was wrapped in a heavy, dark cloak, and wore a dark mask over the upper portion of his face, and a slouch sombrero upon his head.

He was a well-built person, and wore a brown mustache, which drooped below the lower part of his mask.

He seemed very eager as he examined letter after letter, and occasionally he glanced anxiously around him, as if fearful that his presence in the office would be discovered.

At last he seized a letter, at sight of the superscription on which he uttered a low cry of exultation.

"I thought I'd find something of the sort," he muttered. "The fact that Jerry Justice has not visited the clothing store for several days has by no means disarmed my suspicions. They have been in secret correspondence all the time."

The letter he held in his hand was addressed in a round, graceful masculine hand to—

"Miss Floy Fydel."

The masked burglar, as the reader may have observed, was none other than the mayor's son, Giles Goff.

Seating himself at the table, he drew the light closer toward him, and opened the envelope.

The letter which he read ran as follows:

"DEAREST FLOY:—I write you to-night instead of coming to see you personally, as I shall be detained at the mine until long after you will be in bed. Why I write you, is as follows:

"You will remember I told you that I would endeavor to find out whether your father, on his death in Chicago, left you any money.

"I wrote to a friend in Chicago, and told him to institute careful inquiries. My friend, Mr. Seigel, is a very wealthy and influential lawyer, and it appears that he and your father, Philip Fydel, were intimate friends and boon companions.

"When Philip Fydel died, he left behind a fortune of ten thousand dollars, which was willed to you, and given into the charge of Seigel, who was to look you up.

"Before he got the chance, however, he was taken violently ill, and confined to his room until quite recently. He informs me, however, that he will start at once for this place, and bring the money with him, so you will see that, after all, you are in luck; so accept the congratulations of your own true lover,

JERRY J. STICE."

"P. S.—The engagement ring I promised you, I send you to-night by a messenger, preferring not to trust in this letter. It is not a millionaire's gift, but is rather pretty, and I trust you will accept it as a token not only of our betrothal, but of the great love I bear for you.

Ever your own,

"JERRY."

Giles Goff gnashed his teeth with rage, as he finished reading this letter, and he grasped it between his two hands as if he intended to tear it into shreds, but, upon second thought he folded it, and thrust it into his pocket.

"Curses seize the two fools!" he gritted. "So they're engaged, are they, and Floy Fydel is about to come into a fortune? Hum! hum! this is news, and there is work for me. Jerry Justice, you shall never marry that girl, and once more I swear it, as I have done frequently before. You are in my way, and must get out of it, or be got out of it, and that right away! And this Seigel! He must be met, ere he reaches this town, and relieved of that ten thousand.

"Let me see if there are any more letters of interest to me."

He examined the rest of the mail, which had been received too late for delivery that night, and finally selected and opened a particular one.

It was addressed to "The Sheriff, Whiskyville, Ari."

The epistle, which was written in a straggling business hand, was as follows:

"SHERIFF OF WHISKYVILLE, ARI.:—

"SIR:—I have been led to believe that there is a man in your vicinity, engaged in some sort of mining business, by the name of Graham Goff, who, three years ago, committed a daring forgery, in Cleveland, and skipped for the West. He was a short, thick-set man, with a fat face, (when last seen he was smoothly shaven) with brown eyes and hair. He has on his neck, back of the ear, a seed wart, and his nose is rather flat and stubby.

"If you can give me any information in regard to the above described party, it will be made worth your while to do so.

Respectfully,

"J. R. STEBBINS, Detective,

"Chicago, Ill."

Giles Goff gave vent to a prolonged whistle of astonishment, as he read this.

"My old dad!" he ejaculated, "and he a forger? Well, by all that's wonderful! That takes my time! I never heard of it because I and Georgie, were in the South, at the time. I often wondered, however, where the old gent got his boodle."

He read the letter over again, and scratched his head.

"It was a lucky day, or rather a lucky night, when I opened this letter," he said, half aloud—"a lucky night, indeed, for it gives me the pull on the gov'nor. I have now got him where I want him. I've got him right where I can twist him around my finger, at will. A forger, eh, and a fugitive from justice? By Jove, the sly old snoozer has been mighty careful about not giving away his secret. But, I'll work him, now that I've got hold of his secret. I've been longing to get a whack at him, and now, my dutiful dad, I've got it, you bet! I'll make you shell out your fast-accumulating shekels, and besides that, I'll guarantee you'll discharge Jerry Justice, which you have hitherto refused to do. Ah! but it will be sweet revenge to see my rival ousted from his position as superintendent of the Majestic Mine. I'll show him my power, now, and make him a beggar, as sure as my name is Giles Goff!" and the young villain chuckled at his anticipated triumph.

Thrusting the letter in his pocket, along with

the other one, he left the post-office by the rear and locked the door after him, being possessed of a duplicate key.

The next morning, bright and early, he paid a visit to Floy Fydel's store, attired with elaborate taste, and looking in excellent spirits.

Floy had opened up only a short time before, and was engaged in dusting off the counters.

"Good-morning, Miss Fydel!" Goff saluted, in his pleasantest way. "You are up and attending to business quite early, I observe."

"Oh! no earlier than usual," Floy replied scarcely glancing at him.

"I hear you are in good-luck!" Goff went on.

"Good luck? I do not understand you, sir."

"No? Why, is that possible? You surely must have heard about it."

"Heard about what?"

"Why, the fortune that's been left you."

"I know nothing about any fortune."

"You don't say so! Why, that rascal hasn't told you, then. It's all over town. Justice was up at the Hornet, last night, a-setting up the drinks for the house, and telling the crowd as how a fortune of ten thousand dollars had been left you, and as how he was engaged to be married to you, and making his brags of the prospects he had for the future. The whisky flowed freely, and Justice got so beastly full, that he couldn't go to work to-day, and the gov'nor is going to discharge him and put me in his place. And you mean to say the fellow has told you nothing about the fortune?"

"Mr. Justice has told me nothing of the sort," Floy replied coldly, "nor do I put any faith in a word you have uttered."

"Why, Miss Fydel! You do me a great injustice, I assure you. You have but to ask any one at the hotel last night, to prove the correctness of what I have told you. And is it really true you are engaged to that miserable fellow—you, so fair and beautiful, and the heart's idol of every man in the camp? Oh! tell me it is not true!"

"It is quite true, that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Justice," Floy replied, holding up her engagement-finger and exhibiting a handsome band of purest gold.

Goff bent forward to get a better view of it.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "Sure's I'm a live man, it's the very ring he gave my sister when engaged to her!"

"Mr. Justice was never betrothed to your sister, sir!" Floy replied, indignantly.

"Why, to be sure he was, before ever you came to this camp. When he saw you, he broke off the engagement, and sis returned him that ring!"

"It's false!" Floy cried, stamping her foot.

"I do not believe a word of it, nor of anything you have said derogatory to Mr. Justice. Your presence is an intrusion, sir. Leave my store!"

"You order me out, eh?" and Goff turned pale with anger.

"Yes, I order you out. Go!"

"I will go; but, mind you, you have not heard the last of me. Jerry Justice will be discharged to-day, and you can tell him I was the cause of it. And, as for you, my fine young filly, I'm not done with you. I'll humble you, break your proud spirit, and force you to marry me or I'll die in the attempt!"

And with these words, the mayor's son strode from the store, followed by intense words of scorn from the lips of Floy Fydel.

CHAPTER VIII.

RETURNED TO EARTH AND A SON'S VILLAINY.

ABOUT noon that day, Whisky was treated to a brand new sensation, and a by no means ordinary one, at that.

Discovery was made, that, tacked upon one side of the Howling Hornet Hotel, was a two-sheet poster, containing a startling proclamation, the lettering neatly executed with a pencil brush and red ink.

Who had posted the bulletin was a mystery. To all, for swarms of people had been passing there constantly, and any one posting the bill, it would seem, must naturally have been perceived by the passers-by.

Like magic the strange bulletin had made its appearance on the side of the hotel, not unlike magic was the thrill that attacked those who read the placard, which was as follows:

"PROCLAMATION!

"TO THE USURPING VILLAINS OF WHISKYVILLE:—

"BELOVED EARTHLY BRETHREN:—

"This is to apprise you, that according to a promise I made you a week ago, I have returned from the other world, to carry out my oath of vengeance against you and yours, to the letter. I had a fine time during my absence, and really was not sorry I left my anatomical being behind, as I find the spiritual form far easier of locomotion. During

my absence I was made an honorary member of Beelzebub's fire-department, and as he wants more men, I have come back, as recruiting officer.

"I shall make my selections from this camp, and select a cargo of recruits rapidly, as the fires, over the other side, are getting low. So look out for me, and beware of fatal footprints, as, no matter in what locality they may be found, they signify death and disaster! The first man will be your worthy sheriff. You need not waste your time looking for me, for I am as ethereal as air, and twice as swift. Beware! Signed,

"DEADWOOD DICK, JUNIOR."

Crowds of astonished and wondering men and women read this ominous manifesto, nor did these crowds abate, until nearly every person in the camp had scanned it.

Sheriff Levi Loggerhead was among the last to view it, and when he read its allusion to him, he uttered a string of oaths, and tore the paper down.

Consternation at once seized many of the people who had seen Dick Bristol lynched and left for dead before their very eyes, and some of the more superstitious began to pack up their few effects, preparatory to leaving the camp.

A general feeling of uneasiness and apprehension appeared to prevail, and the streets were filled with knots of people who eagerly discussed the affair.

In the mean time, Graham Goff sat in his office, and looked decidedly in an unpleasant frame of mind.

He too had read the bulletin, and the effect on him had been depressing.

"Curse the luck!" he growled. "I don't know what to make of it. Of course there is no such a thing as departed spirits coming back to earth—any fool knows that. And yet, I could swear he was dead, when we left him, for he gave but few struggles, and then, was silent. Perhaps he wasn't dead, however, for his body, it was discovered, the morning after the lynching, had mysteriously disappeared. I'd give a deal to know the truth about the matter, for it is creating a devil of a racket, around town. Ah!"

This exclamation was uttered as Giles Goff, his son, sauntered leisurely into the office.

"Good-mornin', dad!" the dutiful offspring saluted, dropping into a chair.

"Good-morning!" the mayor responded stiffly. "What do you want?"

"Oh! I just dropped in on a little matter of business," Giles replied.

"Business!" repeated the other. "I have no business relations with you, sir!"

"I am aware that we have not transacted much business, but the future holds out some brighter prospects. You ain't lookin' the best sorts to-day, old man. What's gone wrong? Got a twinge of the gout, or are you frettin' over that proclamation of Deadwood Dick's? Pshaw! I wouldn't let that bother me. It's nothing more than a hoax some wag has got up. Besides, there is more serious trouble brewing, to occupy your consideration."

"What do you mean, sir?" the mayor demanded quickly.

"Oh! concerning that little Cleveland matter, a couple of years ago!" Giles coolly replied, as he lit a cigarette.

"What Cleveland matter?" thundered the elder Goff, growing apoplectic in color. "Speak up, condemn you!"

"Why, about that forgery, you know!" Giles said, insinuatingly. "Oh! you're a sly old fox, dad, and you've nursed your secret well, but the cat's out of the bag, at last, sure pop. Here's a copy of a sealed letter I found near the post-office, last evening. It may serve to enlighten you, somewhat. I have kept the original, for future reference."

The elder Goff read over the letter, and then, swore roundly.

"Well, what is it?" his son pleasantly inquired. "What is it? Why, curse it, the devil's to pay. I thought that matter had blown over, and had been forgotten, long ago."

"Such matters don't usually blow over so easily," young Giles logically observed. "So you did commit a heavy forgery, eh?"

"Oh! of course not—you fool. Another man's crime was palmed off on me, and I had to skip out, to save going to prison. And now, it appears, they are still bounding after me."

"Yes, and ten to one they'll nab you unless something is done, at once!"

"What can be done? I am tied up here, in business, and cannot get away!"

"Of course not. What you want is some one to help you out of this scrape!"

"Who?"

"Oh, some one of about my Adonis-like appearance!"

"Bah! You're no good!"

"That depends largely upon circumstances, my royal dad. I can be as good and seraphic as a six-winged angel, or as bad as ever Satan was painted."

"You mean that for an insinuation?"

"Something of the sort, I dare say. You see, you and I are the only possessors of the secret in this camp. If I felt disposed, I could turn my letter over to Loggerhead; he would communicate with Chicago, and almost before you realized what happened, you'd be wearing a striped suit."

"On the other I could write to this detective under some fictitious name, representing myself to be sheriff, and inform this worthy Chicagoan that no person answering to your name and description was to be found in this or surrounding camps. This would be all that would be required, and you would be safe and secure."

"Then go ahead at once. No time must be lost."

"I am ready at once. But we haven't talked over terms yet."

"Terms?"

"Exactly."

"What terms?"

"Why, terms of remuneration for my services. I cannot help you out of this scrape without you pay me well for doing it—oh, not by a jugful!"

"What! not even to save me, your father, from going to prison?"

"Nary time! You've never been any great shakes of a parent to me anyhow, and but for my luck at the card-table, and sundry loans of money from Georgia, I should have been in the poorhouse long ago. So, in dealing with you, I must deal with you the same as I would with a stranger."

The old man frowned at this, and bit his lip with vexation. He saw that his parsimony with his children had not been forgotten, and that he was now getting paid back in his own coin.

"Well, how much do you want?" he demanded, after a couple of minutes' reflection, which convinced him that he was completely in his son's power.

"I want two things," Giles replied. "In the first place, I want Justice at once discharged from his position as superintendent of the Majestic Mine, and myself installed in his place. Secondly, I want twenty thousand dollars in spot cash. Come to these terms and I guarantee to throw the detectives so far off track that you will never be bothered by them."

"And, if I refuse? What then?"

"Well, then, matters would be considerably different, and I should feel constrained to make you trouble. I should send for the detective, and have you arrested. You would be tried and sent to prison for not less than ten years, which would see you an old man when you got out."

"The victims of your forgery would bring suit against your estate, to recover what they had been robbed of—and, you know how lawsuits go. Everything would be swept away, and when you got out of prison you would find yourself old, broken-down in health, penniless, and without friends or a home. Your only refuge, then, would be the poorhouse, where vermin most do congregate, and there you would live and die a pauper and be planted in the potter's-field. How like you the prospectus, old man?"

The Mayor of Whiskyville shuddered. The picture was certainly not particularly attractive.

"Giles Goff! you are a consummate villain!" he groaned.

"Graham Goff! I am simply a chip of the old block!" Giles responded. "The old cock crows; the young one learns! But, what do you say? Are we to come to terms or not?"

"I don't know. I must have time to think."

"How long do you want? Jerry Justice must be discharged at once."

"Why do you so persistently insist upon his discharge? He is a good man and in the right place!"

"Bah! he's a low-lived whelp. I hate him, and then, too, he stands between me and the girl I intend to make my wife!"

"Who is she?"

"Floy Fydell!"

"Bah! she's not for you. When you marry, wed a rich girl, instead of a pauper!"

"She's no beggar. She's got ten thousand dollars coming to her in a few days."

"The deuce you say! Well, that ain't bad. I've had sort of a notion to set my cap for her. But, to change the subject: in case I was to come to your terms, what surety have I that

you would carry out your part of the agreement?"

"My word of honor as a gambler. The word of honor of a gambler is as sacred as the Gospel!"

"Humph! Well, call around this afternoon and you shall have the money."

"How about Justice?"

"I will discharge him to-night, when he quits work."

"All right! We'll consider it a bargain. I will write to the Chicago detective, at once, and send the letter off on the evening stage."

Later in the day Giles Goff received the twenty thousand, and soon after was seated at a faro-table, engaged in "bucking the tiger."

But, it chanced that he played against an Eastern man who knew a thing or so about the "animal" himself, and at sunset young Goff arose from the table without a red cent in his pocket.

CHAPTER IX.

JERRY'S DISCHARGE.

THE Majestic Mine employed two sets of men; one gang by day, and the other by night, the former gang going on at seven and coming off at six, and vice versa with Gang 2.

Jerry Justice, general superintendent, oversaw the day work, while an old miner, named Hale, acted in a like capacity by night; consequently, when his men left the mine, at six P. M., it was customary for Justice to accompany them, and to-night was no exception to the rule. Jerry was a prime favorite among the men whom he controlled, and never had the least trouble in managing them, or in getting good value out of their labor.

He was a stalwart, strong-limbed, handsome fellow, this mine superintendent, some four-and-twenty years of age, with clearly chiseled, Apollo-like features, brilliant black eyes, curling hair of a like color, and a wavy brown mustache which became him greatly.

His was a face habitually cheerful and pleasant of expression, but could be stern, and betokened great resolution and firmness of character.

He was just such a man as 'most any one must admire at sight, and little the wonder, therefore, that Floy Fydell had fallen in love with him, and promised to become his wife as soon as he had amassed enough money to provide them a home.

When Jerry left the mine, that night, along with the other subterranean toilers, he was intercepted by a small boy, who extended to him a scrap of paper.

Upon it was written:

"JERRY JUSTICE:—Be kind enough to call at my office at once. GRAHAM GOFF."

"Short and sweet!" Jerry commented. "I wonder what the old man wants?"

With little idea of the surprise that awaited him, the stalwart superintendent strode briskly away, and soon entered the mayor's office.

Graham Goff sat at a table, engaged in counting over some money, and scarcely looked up, at the superintendent's entrance.

"Did you send for me, Mr. Goff?" Justice asked, taking a chair.

"Yes, I sent for you!" was the gruff answer. "How much do I owe you, Justice?"

"I believe two months' salary are due me, but I am in no particular hurry for it, as I have plenty for my immediate needs."

"I prefer to pay you now. Hundred and fifty dollars, isn't it?"

"I believe so."

"Well, here it is. Justice, you need not report for duty in the morning. I shall not need your services any longer."

"Shall not need me any longer? Why not, sir? What have I done to deserve this sudden and unexpected dismissal?"

"Oh, nothing in particular, more than that I wish to reduce wages, and my son stands ready for half the price I pay you. Then, too, I hear you and I are rivals for the hand of Floy Fydell, and I don't tolerate any meddling in my love affairs. If you will promise to leave town at once, and for good, I'll make you a present of another cool hundred."

"I hope you do not take me for such a consummate idiot as that amounts to!" Jerry cried, flushing with anger. "I suppose you have the power and a perfect right to discharge me, if it suits your notion, but, so far as your trying to get me out of the camp is concerned, that is utterly preposterous. I haven't the slightest idea of leaving the place, and you need not cherish any hope of winning Miss Fydell, for she is already engaged to me."

"Oh! she is?"

"Exactly."

"But how do you expect to support a wife without work?—or do you expect her to support you?"

"By no means. I have a snug little sum saved up, and besides, I shall not be long out of employment."

"You will find out differently. If you persist in remaining here, I'll use all my influence to prevent you from getting a job, and besides, will have you locked up on a charge which I can make."

"Try it, and see how it will turn out!" Jerry said, as he arose to depart. "You'll find you are bucking against the wrong man when you buck against me. Henceforth I shall look upon you as an enemy, and you need not regard me as a friend. Good-day!"

"Hold on! Will a thousand dollars tempt you to leave town?"

"No, nor all the thousands you possess!" Jerry retorted. "I'm not the sort of a hairpin that can either be bought or sold, as you'll soon understand!"

"We'll see about that!" the mayor declared, fiercely. "If you can't be induced in any way, I'll have you driven out!"

Jerry made no reply, except to laugh defiantly as he left the office.

He made his way immediately to the clothing store of Floy Fydel, and entered.

There were no customers in the store, and the fair proprietress was perched upon one end of a counter, engaged in the perusal of a novel, making a decidedly attractive picture, too.

"My darling Floy!" Jerry said, advancing toward her, "how glad I am to see you!"

"Stop!" she said, motioning him off. "Don't be quite so familiar, please."

Jerry paused in blank amazement.

"Why, Floy, what do you mean?" he ejaculated. "What have I done to merit this reception? Did you not get the ring?"

"Yes, I got the ring."

"And the letter?"

"I received no letter."

"No? Why, I sent one to the post-office, yesterday, because I couldn't come and see you."

"I called at the office, sir, but there was no mail for me."

"Strange! very strange! But, Floy, why do you speak so coldly to me?"

"Because I have cause. The way you carried on at the Hornet Hotel last night was highly disgraceful, and I am disgusted."

"Floy! Floy! What do you mean? I wasn't at the Howling Hornet Hotel last night, nor have I been there for several days. For Heaven's sake explain, for I cannot understand what you are driving at."

"Oh, I presume not! You are very innocent. So, to enlighten you, I will tell you why I feel disgraced and insulted."

"Last night, having previously received word that a fortune had been left me, you went to the hotel and had a jollification. You treated the crowd repeatedly, and whisky flowed like water. Between your cups you told the crowd that I had inherited a fortune, and that you were going to marry me, and made your brags of the fine times you were going to have after we were married. Finally you got so beastly drunk that you couldn't attend to business to-day, and Graham Goff has threatened to discharge you. Now, don't you think that I, a respectable orphan girl, with naught but my good name to defend me, should feel insulted at such conduct?"

Jerry stood staring at her, like one thunder-struck.

"Yes," he said, slowly, "you would have grave cause to feel grossly insulted if there was a word of truth in what you have told me. But, by the great God in heaven, I swear that I was not near the hotel last night. I was at the Majestic Mine from early in the morning until near daybreak this morning, repairing a break in the hoisting machinery. The report that I was at the Hornet, and drunk, is an infamous, a damnable lie!"

"Well, I hope it is," Floy said, brightening up. "I haven't placed entire confidence in the story, but concluded to put you to the test. But, tell me, is there any truth that a fortune has been left me?"

"Yes. When your father died, he left you ten thousand dollars, and the executor of his will is now on his way here with your money. It was to inform you of this that I sent you the letter, which you say you did not receive."

"Nor did I. Who took the letter?"

"Schroeder, my timekeeper."

"Why did he not bring it direct here?"

"Because he was late to catch the stage for Four Forks, and had not the time to run down here. So I told him to drop the letter in the post-office."

"Had you told any one about the fortune?"

"Not a soul."

"Then where could my informant have gained his information?"

"Blamed if I know, unless, perchance, he broke into the post-office and obtained the letter there."

"Maybe that is the correct theory. I don't think he is any too good to do such a thing."

"Then I surmise I know who your informant was," Jerry said, grimly.

"Who?"

"That low-lived mongrel-cur Giles Goff."

"You are right. He came early in the morning and told me in substance what I have told you. I didn't believe him and told him so, and ordered him to leave the store. He flew into a rage then, and said that you would be discharged to-day, and told me to tell you that he was the direct cause of it."

Jerry's face grew stern with anger.

"Curse the fellow! No doubt he spoke the truth. But, wait! I am not done with these Goffs, yet, by a long shot. I know a trick worth two of theirs."

"But, Jerry, you haven't really been discharged?"

"Yes. I got my walking papers to-night, from old man Goff!"

"Oh! isn't that too bad! I am so sorry!"

"Pshaw! don't mention it. I don't mind it a bit! I'll soon have a job again. But, I intend to teach this Giles Goff a lesson he'll never forget, and that, too, before another sun rises. I'll learn him to circulate lies about me, the hound. But, let that drop. You got the ring all right, dearest?"

"Yes. See I have it on my finger. I was so proud of it, until—until—"

"Until what?"

"Until that Giles Goff said it was once his sister's engagement ring, and that you gave it to her, but after I came, the engagement was broken, and the ring returned."

Jerry's face clouded dark with anger.

"Another of that infernal whelp's lies!" he gritted. "I was never betrothed to any woman until I was betrothed to you."

"But, I mustn't tarry here. I'll hunt up this villain, and choke his lying words down his throat."

"Oh! Jerry, you will get hurt!"

Jerry smiled.

"I'll take the chances on that!" he replied. "I am not a man who is easily hurt. So good-by, now, and when you see a chap crawling along the street, who looks as if he had passed through a thrashing machine, you can safely guess that that chappy is what was once Giles Goff!"

And kissing his affianced, Justice left, a resolute gleam in his eyes.

CHAPTER X.

A NIGHT OF MYSTERY.

THAT afternoon, by the incoming stage from Four Forks, a rather queer character arrived in Whiskyville.

She was hump-backed, gray-haired, and evidently an old woman, although the freshness of her face, and the lack of the wrinkles of old age contrasted strangely with her straggling hair and infirm walk. Her eyes were guarded by green goggles, and, although it was warm weather, her hands were incased in woolen mittens.

Her attire consisted of an old calico dress, which was remarkable for the rents in it, through which glimpses could be caught of a red flannel petticoat. Her feet were incased in coarse, heavy shoes, and none too cleanly-looking stockings; a bit of a red plaid shawl was pinned about her shoulders, while upon her head she wore one of those huge, sky-scraper pokebonnets so much in vogue a couple of generations ago, this particular piece of head-gear in question being gorgeously decorated with red and yellow ribbons and rosettes.

In one hand she carried a heavy, crook-top cane, which aided her to hobble along.

In the other hand she carried a sachel of the old style, which appeared to be well-filled and heavy.

An odd-looking old creature she was, especially for a place like Whiskyville, and of course she at once attracted considerable attention.

Her first move, after leaving the stage, was to enter the bar of the Howling Hornet and call for whisky.

A bottle and glass were set before her, and she

turned out a by no means small "horn," and gulped it down with the gusto of a dry miner.

Then she drew from her pocket a small salt-bag, from which she extracted a handful of gold coin, and, out of it, paid for the drink.

Later on she was seen upon the street, engaged peddling. Her stock-in-trade consisted of a fair quality of playing-cards, at fifty cents per pack. In any store or saloon in the camp an inferior quality could not be obtained for less than one dollar, and from that up."

As nine-tenths of the men in every mining-camp play cards either for gain or for amusement, the bargains the old woman was offering were regarded as something extraordinary, and her purchasers were numerous. She had no difficulty in disposing of her sachelful in short order; then she disappeared within the Grand Pacific Hotel, where she had taken a room.

About sunset, when the miners came tramping home from work, she was once more out in the middle of the street between the two hotels, disposing of her specialty to a crowd of customers.

Instead of the sachel, however, she now sold from a huge packing-trunk, which had arrived with her on the stage. From this trunk she produced numberless packs of cards, and pocketed the money as fast as her mittened hands could work.

It was interesting to watch her, and also to see the avidity with which miners and citizens bit at the offered bait.

A card, attached to a four-foot stick planted in the ground at one end of the trunk, announced that the busy street-merchant was

"MISS MEHETIBLE MUGGINS,

"Dealer in Playing-Cards,

"Cincinnati, O."

But whether Mehetible really came from Cincinnati, or New Zealand, she was raking in the cash in the most approved manner.

It was while doing the liveliest trade of the evening that the sheriff, Levi Loggerhead, came swaggering along.

He had been boozing pretty liberally, and, with him, "bug-juice" had the bad effect of putting him in anything but a good humor.

As soon as he saw Mehetible and the lively trade she was driving, a wicked gleam entered his eyes.

He strode up to her and clapped his hand heavily upon her shoulder.

"Lookeer hyer, old woman! Who are you, and what are ye doin' here?" he cried, gruffly.

"Sure an' can't yez say?" was the reply. "Beyant is me card, so it is, an' av yez kin rade, ye kin foind out all about it!"

Loggerhead took a squint at the card in question, and uttered a grunt of disapproval.

"That's a deuce of a name!" he growled: "et's enuff ter stop er lokermotive. Say, now, lookeer heer, old woman, hev ye got er license fer peddlin' on ther public street?"

"Phat is that?"

"I say, have yer got a license—a permit from the mayor—to sell goods upon this public boulevard?"

"Faith, an' I have none at all! An' who the devil moight ye be?"

"Waal, ef ther court do know herself, and I allow she do, I am just erbout ther daisy sheriff of this hyer city. So, Mehetible Muggins, if you hain't got no license, you shet up that trunk and get off ther street! Can't 'low no fakirs on ther principal thoroughfare without they've got a license!" and Loggerhead drew himself up to his fullest height of official importance.

"Get off the street, is it?" and Mehetible struck a belligerent attitude.

"Yes, git off ther street!" he repeated, loftily, "and be lively about it, too!"

"Shure, an' I won't, at all! Oi've as much right on the strate as any ither person!" Mehetible declared. "Phat 'ave you got to say about the matter, onnyhow?"

"I'll soon show you! Come, shut up shop an' vamoose, or I'll puli you in!"

"Pull me in, will yez? Well, now, ye'd better not be thryin' it, if yez don't want a crack on yer pate! It's a Tipperary lass I am, from Cincinnati, an' devil a bit afraid am I av any polaceman, big or little!"

And from some part of her clothing, Mehetible suddenly produced a formidable policeman's club, and flourished it within a few inches of the sheriff's nose.

The crowd which had assembled, gave a yell of laughter, at this exhibition of pluck, while Loggerhead swore, roundly.

"Ye old Irish hag!" he roared, "I'll pull ye in anyhow, jest fer yer lip. So come along, ye bog-trotter. Ther majesty o' the law shall be

respected in this new precinct, while Levi Loggerhead is at the helm, and don't ye fergit it!" and seizing the itinerant merchant by the two shoulders, he endeavored to push her forward.

But, Miss Mehetable Muggins didn't push worth a cent. Like a balky horse, she bolted, and he failed to move her more than a step or two.

The sheriff evidently had a job of larger dimensions than he at first supposed; and while tugging away at the obstinate Miss Muggins, heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a stern voice said:

"Let the old woman alone, Loggerhead! She's doing no harm!"

With a savage oath, the sheriff wheeled about, to find himself confronted by genial Joe Garry, of the Grand Pacific.

"Oh! it's you, is it!" he roared. "What d'ye mean, cuss ye?"

"I mean for you to let the old woman alone!" Garry replied, decisively.

"What'll I let her alone for? Ain't I sheriff of this camp?"

"That don't signify that you run the whole town, by a long shot. The old woman's harming no one, so you keep your hands off her, or I'll put a head on you as big as her trunk there."

"Ye will, hey? Cuss yer infernal picture, I'll show ye what it means to interfere with the law!" and leaping forward, Loggerhead aimed a terrible blow at Garry's head.

It was neatly parried by Garry's left, however, while his right knocked the sheriff clean off his feet.

Loggerhead was up again—in an instant, however, and made a fierce rush at his adversary, and the two men clinched in a dead-lock embrace and with one free hand, each began to pummel the other.

Loggerhead was a brawny ruffian—a very giant in size, and far superior to Garry, in point of personal strength, but Joe had indomitable pluck, and for several minutes the two men fought fiercely, pummeling each other unmercifully.

At length, however, they tripped and fell, heavily, Loggerhead on top.

He now had his adversary at disadvantage, and, in an instant, a knife glittered in the vivid moonlight, as clutched in his right hand, he raised it aloft to strike the fatal blow.

But, ere the blow was struck, the sheriff threw up both hands, and, uttering an agonized shriek, rolled off his victim to the ground. As he did not stir, several persons approached him, when it was discovered that there was a tiny bullet-hole in his temple, from which the blood was slowly oozing.

He had been shot dead!

But by whom?

No one had heard a rifle or pistol report, nor anything like one.

Then, how had the sheriff received his death-wound?

Here, certainly, was a mystery.

While the crowd gathered around, and stared at the dead man, Joe Garry arose to his feet.

"Who shot him?" he demanded, as he saw the dead sheriff.

"Did you?" asked a bystander.

"Well, I reckon not," was the reply. "He had me by the throat, and was choking the life out of me, when, suddenly, he let up, and rolled off. There's a mystery about this."

"I should say there was," coincided the local doctor, who had been examining the wound. "That wound was caused by nothing else than a 32-caliber bullet, and it was sent with sufficient force to cut a round hole through the skull. Did any one here hear the report of firearms? For one, I didn't."

The crowd exchanged glances, and shook their heads negatively.

None of them had heard any report.

"Mighty strange!" the doctor declared. "I can see no other explanation than that an air-gun must have been used; for, certainly, that wound was caused by a bullet. There's no getting around that, and death was instantaneous, too!"

"Hi! spread apart there!" cried a miner in the crowd. "I've made a discovery. By the great jumpin' Jericho! it's the fatal footprint!"

The crowd immediately parted so that the light of the soaring moon could fall upon the ground.

Then a horrified shout went up from many a throat!

There, deeply impressed in the sandy soil, was the imprint of a man's boot, and an extremely large boot it must have been, too, and the most startling thing was that the entire impression was of a vivid red color!

"The Fatal Footstep!" cried a chorus of voices.

"Deadwood Dick's prophecy has been fulfilled!" cried Garry. "His warning was, to beware of the Fatal Footprint, as death and disaster would surely follow! Yonder lies Levi Loggerhead, dead as a herring. In his proclamation, Deadwood Dick declared that the sheriff would be the first drafted, and he has kept his word. Gentlemen, as sure as my name is Joe Garry, I wouldn't give five cents for the future of this camp!"

His words seemed to have a strange effect upon the crowd, who stood staring each other dubiously in the face.

Evident it was that a general feeling of consternation was experienced by every one.

They stood there, motionless and speechless, each seemingly trying to divine the others' innermost thoughts.

And the soaring moon sent down its effulgence of golden light, upon their heads, as if to mock their perplexity.

Suddenly, there rung out, clear and distinct upon the night air, a shriek of laughter—a wild, blood-curdling shriek of elfin laughter, most startling to the sense of hearing!

It came from the direction of the stamp-mill, which was plainly visible from where the crowd were congregated.

Of one accord all eyes were turned in that direction.

Then, a hoarse, horrified cry went up.

Upon the roof-ridge of the big mill, tall and erect, and looking terrible in the whitish moonlight, was a spectral form, clad from top to toe, in a flowing robe, of purest white. The robe was all there was to be seen, for there was no visible semblance of a head, and the only semblance to a human body, was a long, white-draped arm, that pointed toward the horror-stricken spectators.

Again came that wild, elfish laugh; then, with lightning quickness, the spectral figure disappeared from view, and no one could say whither it went.

It was a mystery of a night!

Was Deadwood Dick alive?

Or was this indeed a ghostly visitant?

CHAPTER XI.

THE RIVALS MEET—THAT FOOTPRINT AGAIN.

THERE was no sleep for the people of Whiskyville, that night.

The greatest excitement prevailed among all classes, over the singular death of Sheriff Loggerhead, the crimson footprint, and the remarkable apparition on the roof of the stamp-mill.

Knots of people congregated on the street, and in the saloons, and the matter was discussed, and rediscussed, while a considerable number of the more superstitious residents, announced their intention of vacating the camp, in the morning.

Many expressed their opinion that Deadwood Dick was still alive, while others clung to the theory that it was his disembodied spirit which had appeared on the roof of the stamp-mill.

All night long the crowd shifted to and fro, many fearing to seek their own dwellings, lest they encounter the dead specter of the mill.

Only when daybreak arrived did the crowd begin to thin out.

In the meantime, however, two events of importance had occurred.

About midnight we will drop into the Howling Hornet Saloon, where a by no means small assemblage of customers was ranged along the bar, but the gaming-tables were comparatively deserted.

At one table, in an obscure part of the room, sat Giles Goff. His elbows rested upon the table, and his chin in his hands, while on his face was a dark scowl, intermingled with an expression of utter despondency.

"Broke! dead broke!" he muttered, "like the fool I am, skinned out of every red, and with no immediate prospect of making another raise. Twenty thousand dollars melted away in a few short hours. Curse myself for an idiotic jackass. What am I to do—starve? No! not by a majestic sight. I'll steal, first. Georgie has refused to aid me any more, because I told her I had secured the discharge of that fellow, Justice, whom she dotes on, and when she says 'no,' that settles it. As for the old man, he'd refuse me were I to make another application to him—yes! he'd refuse me, and run the risk of the detective getting him. But, something must be done, that's sure!"

Thus he sat, in sullen deliberation, until he felt a heavy grip upon his shoulder, that caused him to face around quickly to behold himself confronted by—Jerry Justice!

Yes, Jerry Justice, upon whose face was a

stern expression, and in whose eyes burned a fire of hatred and revenge.

"How do you do, Mr. Giles Goff?" he said, still keeping his iron grasp upon the other's shoulder. "How are you feeling, this evening?"

"I'm feeling all right. Let go my shoulder!"

"You're feeling all right, are you?" went on Jerry, not heeding the other's command. "Well, that is good. I generally like to see a man feeling good, but you are not a man, and consequently you are probably feeling better now, than you will some few minutes later. Gentlemen, will some of you step this way?"

The invitation had the desired effect, for a score of men at once came forward, most of whom were employees of the Majestic Mine. And beside them came also, no less a personage than the itinerant merchantess, Miss Mehetable Muggins, who had a short time before entered the saloon to get a "nightcap."

"Gentlemen!" Jerry went on, "I suppose you all know me, and know this other loafer as well—this cowardly cur, liar and thief, whom I am about to wipe up this room with. Before I begin operations, it would be appropriate for me to make a brief explanation so that you will know that I have a just cause for doing what I am about to do."

"This being, erroneously dubbed 'man,' has done me a grievous and villainous injury. For some time past, Goff and I have been rivals for the hand of Miss Fydele. Goff was jealous of me, and this jealousy grew on him until it became a mania. His hatred for me increased each day, and he would have murdered me only he was too much of a coward and sneak."

"At last, however, by robbing the mails at the post-office having learned that Miss Fydele and I were betrothed, he resolved upon a desperate stroke, to influence Floy against me, and so destroy my chances!"

Jerry then related in detail the circumstances of Goff's visit to the clothing store, and continued:

"His villainy did not end here. He was not satisfied with trying to poison the mind of my affianced against me, but made his brags he would have me discharged from his father's employ. He has frequently tried to do this, but was never successful until to-day. To-night old Goff informed me that my services would be no longer required, as his son would fill my position."

"Now, then, gentlemen, what had I ought to do with this detestable scoundrel?"

"Kill him!" the miners cried, in a chorus. "He'll get killed if he comes around the Majestic Mine!"

"Yis, be afther knockin' the smithereens out av the bla'guard!" chimed in Mehetable Muggins.

"I ought to do him up, 'tis true!" Jerry declared, "but I want no man's life to answer for. But I am not going to let him off without a taste of Jerry Justice. He's got to stand up before me and fight like a man, or I'll have to shoot him, as I would a cur!"

The audience, which had by this time greatly increased in numbers, gave a yell of approval, while Mehetable, with a real Donnybrook yell, executed a few steps of an Irish jig.

"Hooray!" she cried; "there's the lad for ye, wull ye now! Go fer him, me buck, an' do him up, an' may the spirit av the Sivin Sisters lind yez more power!"

"Come, get up!" Jerry cried, jerking Goff to his feet, and giving him a push that sent him half-way across the room, where he fell sprawling. By the time he was able to regain his feet, he found himself confronted by Justice.

"Put up!" the young ex-superintendent cried sternly. "It's your only alternative!"

Goff made no reply, but with a vengeful gleam in his eyes, he squared himself.

Outside of Whiskyville, in other places where he had been, he had achieved some little notoriety as a clever pugilist.

Justice knew nothing of this; nor would it have made any difference if he had. His spirit yearned for satisfaction, and he meant to have it.

Jerry opened the battle by leading off with his right, and falling short, for which failure he received a terrific blow on the cheek.

Then the battle began in dead earnest, and that it was no baby's game was evident.

With the desperation of deep rancor the two men fought, raining blow after blow upon face and body, and scarce a blow struck by either was ineffective.

It was only a question which could hold out under the terrible punishment the longest, to decide who would be the victor of the vengeful duel.

None such before had ever been fought in Arizona.

The crowd looked on in breathless suspense.

But for the labored breathing of the two and their strokes there was not a sound to be heard.

Both were bleeding freely, but neither had yet scored a knock-down, most wonderful to relate.

Finally, however, it became perceptible that Goff was getting "groggy," and soon, two well-directed blows from Jerry's fist sent him staggering against the wall.

Here he braced himself and attempted to draw a revolver, but, ere he could do so, he uttered a cry of pain and fell headlong to the floor.

When the doctor reached his side life was extinct!

The fact was at once communicated to Jerry. He simply nodded, picked up his hat, and, blood-blinded, staggered from the saloon.

He had not been gone two minutes when a yell of horror pealed from a miner's lips, as he pointed to the floor.

There, in plain view of all, was that ominous emblem of death—the vivid red imprint of the Fatal Footstep!

CHAPTER XII.

RED RUPERT UNMASKED.

GRAHAM GOFF retired early to bed that same night of the tragedy at the Howling Hornet. His head ached and he was possessed of a sort of feeling of nervous dread, which he hoped to be able to sleep off.

But it was a vain hope, for, when he got to bed, he lay for hours, tossing and tumbling about, not a wink of sleep visiting his eyes.

It was after midnight ere he fell off into a doze, which lasted but a short time, when he awoke with a start and sat bolt upright in bed.

The lamp was still burning and he saw by the clock that it was only 2 A. M.

"Good heavens! I can't stand this!" he gasped, wiping the perspiration from his face. "I must get out in the open air, or I shall suffocate!"

He had not undressed himself at all on retiring; so, putting on his hat he was ready for out of doors.

He was about leaving his room, when he made a discovery that caused a cry of horror to burst from his lips.

The floor of the room was not carpeted, but had been painted a light color, to give it a cheerful appearance.

On the boards, near the door, the Mayor of Whiskyville now beheld a thing that nearly froze the blood in his veins—the imprint of a human foot, in vivid crimson colors!

Transfixed with horror, he gazed at the omen of warning for a moment; then, uttering another yell, he burst open the door, and fled from the house as if Satan and all his imps were after him.

Outside he paused some distance from his residence, and glanced carefully around him. He lived on the outskirts of the camp, some little distance from any other habitation, preferring this sort of existence to living at the hotel with his daughter.

After satisfying himself that there was no one abroad in his immediate vicinity, he kept on toward his office.

"Curse that footprint!" he growled. "How came it there? Both the door and windows were locked, and no one could have got in without arousing me. Yet there is the mark which Deadwood Dick's bulletin said should appear before death. Gods! can it be that there is such a thing as the dead coming back to earth in spiritual form? Nothing has unnerved me so much for twenty years, I'll swear."

And, evidently greatly agitated, he strode on.

"I know one thing I'll do!" he muttered. "By the stage to-morrow I'll take my money and light out for Texas. There I can live in peace and security on my two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and get some fellow to come u here and run the Majestic Mine for me. If he falls a victim to this accursed Dick Bristol it's his own lookout."

And the old reprobate chuckled at the cleverness of his scheme.

Little did he dream that a vengeance sure as death was hovering around him, and that he was destined never to leave the gulch alive!

"Yes, I'll take my boodle from the safe this very night, and store it about my person, preparatory for flight, and then when the stage comes to-morrow I'll bid good-by to this place forever. The only thing I'm sorry for, is that I yielded to that rascally son of mine and gave

him the twenty thousand, for, now that I'm going to skip, I could defy the detective. I'm sorry, too, I discharged Justice. He would have been the very man I could trust to leave behind to manage my business."

By this time he was nearing the office.

As he approached he thought he detected a faint glimmer of light.

He paused and watched steadfastly, but saw nothing.

"It must have been a delusion!" he muttered, "but I could almost swear I saw a ray of light. If there should be burglars in the office, I should consider it a lucky omen that sent me here. I'll make sick burglars out of them if they are there!"

He drew his revolver and examined it to make sure it was in good working order, and then stole softly on until he stood before the front door—for there was another door to the office in the rear, which opened into a small back or retiring room.

Bending forward, he applied one eye to the keyhole.

The next instant he started back, barely repressing an exclamation of astonishment.

There was a light within the office!

He had not been deceived. The burglars were there, no doubt, at work robbing his safe.

For a moment he stood still, not knowing exactly what to do.

It never took him a great length of time to form a plan, and he soon had one for the occasion.

Stealing around to the rear of the office, he removed his boots, and then softly unlocked and opened the door.

The rear room was in utter darkness, but a gleam of light came from under the door that led into the main office.

This door swung either way, noiselessly, being mounted on patent hinges, and was unprovided with fastenings, so that Goff knew he would have no difficulty in gaining entrance to the office.

Tip-toeing across the floor, he reached the swinging door and listened.

He could detect no sound, however.

Next, with his revolver ready for instant use, he pushed the door far enough ajar to allow his head to protrude into the next room.

What he saw nearly took his breath away.

Kneeling before his big safe, with a lantern by his side, was a man—a slender individual, attired in a black suit of clothes, trimmed with red, and a scarlet cloak flung about his shoulders. His feet were incased in knee-boots, and a wide rimmed sombrero surmounted his head. The upper part of his face was concealed by a reddish mask, the remainder by reddish whiskers.

The door of the safe before him was wide open, and the floor in front and beside him was littered with bank-notes of various denominations, which he was busily engaged in sorting and tying into packages.

Evidently his burglarship was not anticipating a surprise, for he never once raised his eyes from his work.

Goff drank in the scene for several minutes, keeping his temper marvelously under control.

"So that is Red Rupert, eh?" he mused, "who has so repeatedly and persistently robbed me. Ho! ho! 'twas a lucky thing I came here to-night, for, evidently, the cuss calculates to make a clean sweep this time. Humph! we shall see! I am surprised in the man, however. In figure he looks more like a woman than a man, and that red beard is false, I'll wager. I wonder how he would cotton to a little surprise?"

Pushing open the door wider, the mayor let himself noiselessly into the office, his revolver at full cock, for instant use.

It was not his purpose to shoot the bold burglar, unless forced to. To effect his capture would be even a greater victory, for he, the mayor, had not been the only one to suffer by these burglarious visits. Others had suffered losses as well as the obese chief magistrate.

Goff tiptoed forward, with the stealth of a cat, until he stood within a few feet of the burglar.

Then, leveling his revolver, he said:

"Hello!"

Red Rupert looked up, with a startled cry, and hastily sprung to his feet.

"Stand!" Goff commanded, authoritatively. "Move an inch further and you die. So I have caught you in the act, have I, Mr. Red Rupert?"

"It seems so," was the answer, in a tremulous voice, plainly a feminine voice, too.

"Oh! it seems so, does it? Well, I should judge it did. So you were going to clean me out, entirely, to-night, were you?"

"Yes, I was, and then retire from this sort of life for good!"

"Well, that's a cool admission, hanged if it ain't. How long have you been in this enterprising line of business?"

"Only a short time."

"Do you know that a long term of imprisonment stares you in the face?"

"I suppose so!" was the careless reply. "It matters little, however, for now that the only one that I ever loved is forever lost to me, I am utterly reckless as to what becomes of me!"

"You are a woman!" the mayor said, eying the culprit sharply.

"Well, what of that? It's none of your business, is it?"

This, in a tone of defiance.

"Yes, it is. Remove that mask and false beard, so that I can see if I know you!"

"Oh! no. None of that, if you please!"

"Do as I order you, or I'll blow your brains out!" roared the mayor. "I'll stand no trifling, and your life depends upon your obedience."

Do as I bid you, and perhaps I may be more lenient with you!"

Red Rupert hesitated a moment, and then, tearing away the mask and false beard, she turned a defiant face toward the mayor.

Graham Goff started back, with a horrified exclamation.

"Good God!" he cried. "My daughter, Georgie!"

"Yes! your daughter, Georgie!" was the laconic answer!

For a moment the astounded parent stood like one struck dumb.

It had never occurred to him that it was his own child who had been systematically robbing him.

Georgie viewed his astonishment with a faint smile of amusement.

"You seem surprised," she observed, quietly.

"Surprised! Good heaven! why shouldn't I be surprised? What ever tempted you to rob your own father, girl, as you have been doing?"

"Oh! circumstances!" was the nonchalant answer. "You were never much of a father to me or to Giles, and you were always miserly and selfish to the last degree. So as you were making plenty of money, I thought it no more than fair that you should share with your offspring. Knowing that a personal application would be met with blank refusal, I conceived the idea of taking the matter into my own hands, and helping myself. How well I have succeeded, you already know!"

"Yes, you have succeeded only too well. Already you have robbed me of over fifteen thousand dollars, and but for my timely arrival, here, to-night, you would have no doubt ruined me! Girl, I've a mind to kill you where you stand!"

"I suppose that's your privilege, as you have the drop on me!" Georgie replied, coolly. "However, I dare say it would be to your advantage to spare me, as I can be of some service to you, in the coming trouble."

"What trouble?"

"Oh! you haven't heard of it, then? Why, to-morrow, there is to be a general strike of the miners, who, as you know, embrace fully two-thirds of the people in the camp. The strike is because you discharged Jerry Justice, and he, in conjunction with your deadliest enemy, Deadwood Dick, will lead the strikers, who have for some time been formed into a secret union."

"Bosh! Deadwood Dick is dead! And as for the miners striking, I care not a fig, for I can easily fill their places!"

"Dick Bristol is not dead. I know that, because I saw him to-night. This ghost and footprint business is all a humbug and a scare. And, as for the strikers, they intend to guard the mine, to prevent others from going to work, and also intend to drive you and every one else but the union men, from the pocket. This Deadwood Dick has the reputation of being a very dare-devil in leading a band of men to battle, and always comes out of victor!"

Graham Goff looked thoughtful and concerned.

Now that his property interests were thus threatened, all thought of leaving the town vanished like magic. He would stay, rally what men around him he could, and fight for that which he claimed to be his, by right of possession.

"What service could you be to me, in such a crisis?" he finally asked.

"More than you think. If this Deadwood Dick, Junior, and Jerry Justice were removed, it is doubtful if there would be any strike, as the miners would have no leaders, of any worth or sense, and without competent leaders,

they would not hold out long, even if they did strike."

"And you propose to remove these two men?"

"Yes. I certainly do."

Graham Goff eyed his daughter, admiringly.

"Very well. Be it so. Do you swear?"

"By all that is holy!"

"Very well! It is settled!"

CHAPTER XIII. THE FUGITIVE.

WHEN morning once more dawned it witnessed a great change in the weather.

The season of the year was late, but the weather had been so even and delightful, that no one scarcely realized that summer had passed away.

But this morning all was changed.

Where but a few hours before the moon had soared through a cloudless expanse of star-set azure blue, the sky was now covered by a sodden mass of cold, dull gray clouds, from which fell a drizzling, chilling rain.

Winter had set in in dead earnest, even for that semi-tropic climate of Arizona.

Up the mountain-side, and among the crags overlooking Whiskeyville, sat a man, under a great overhanging ledge of rock, that sheltered him from wind and rain. In front of him burned a little fire of pine cones, that drove off the chill. A few feet beyond the fire was a sheer abyss of space, that dropped down hundreds of feet among the foothills.

The ledge could only be reached by a narrow, dangerous path, that zig-zagged along the mountain-side.

From the ledge an unobstructed view could be obtained of the mining-camp below.

The man who sat by the fire, beneath the ledge, was none other than Jerry Justice, ex-superintendent of the Majestic Mine.

His face had been cleansed of blood, but was liberally covered with bruises, that did much toward depriving him of his former good looks.

His clothes, too, were soiled with blood-stains, and his whole appearance betokened a disconsolate and troubled human being.

There was a strange expression upon poor Jerry's face, the principal element of which was remorse.

"Yes! I am a murderer," he muttered—"an outcast and an outlaw. So much for my infernal temper. I did not mean to kill Goff; I only intended to punish him for insulting Floy. Poor Floy! When she hears of what I have done, her love for me will change to aversion. Yes! yes! all hope is gone. I am shut out from the world, and, ere now, doubtless, am a hunted man. Naught remains for me, while life endures, but to skulk around like a wolf in the night. What seems strange is that the last two blows I struck Goff should have been instrumental in causing his death, for neither of them hit in a vital spot."

Moody and dejected, Jerry sat gazing gloomily down toward the mining-camp, while the chilly, drizzling rain came ceaselessly down.

All nature seemed to have become tinged with a fit of the blues.

Finally Jerry was aroused from what was evidently an unpleasant reverie, by the sound of a footfall, and looking quickly up, to his great astonishment saw Floy Fydel standing within a few feet of him, wrapped and hooded in a long waterproof.

Jerry sprang quickly to his feet.

"Floy!" he ejaculated, "for heaven's sake, what brings you here?"

"What brings me here? How can you ask that? Do I not love you?" and she advanced and threw her arms about his waist. "But, why are you here, dearest? Why did you leave the camp?"

"Because I am a murderer, and because I love life too dearly to submit to the hangman's noose, Floy!" he replied, bitterly.

"You are not a murderer, Jerry!"

"What! is not Giles Goff dead?"

"Yes, he is dead, but you did not kill him!"

"Why tell me this? Did I not strike the last two blows? Did I not see him fall, and did not the doctor pronounce him dead before I left? Yes, Floy: I am a murderer—an outcast on the face of the earth—and no fit associate for you. You must leave me, and our paths in life must never more meet."

"No! no! Jerry; I will never leave you—never! You are my betrothed, my love, my very life, and were you ten times a murderer, I would cling to you through thick and thin!"

"You are a noble girl, Floy," Jerry said, drawing him closer to him and fondly gazing down into her pure brown eyes—"far too pure, innocent and good for one like me. No! no! I

cannot permit the sacrifice. I shall be a hunted, skulking criminal, and it will be impossible for you to accompany me. Even though it will be a hard blow for me to give you up, you must return to camp and let me go my way."

"Never! never!" Floy replied, firmly. "Even as we have loved each other, so shall we go down to death together. It is useless for you to try to persuade me to leave you, for I am resolved, and my resolve cannot be broken. I have made all arrangements to accompany you. As soon as I heard the particulars of the affair, and that you had fled, I immediately disposed of my store at a good price and left the camp."

"How did you know where to find me?"

"You once described this place to me as the place where you had spent a stormy night, and intuition told me to come here."

"Was there much stir in camp over Goff's death, when you came away?"

"Considerable, for the reason that the mayor had just offered ten thousand dollars for your capture, dead or alive."

A hard expression came over Jerry's face.

"That settles it!" he said. "I will be hounded down to the very death."

"But in our dying moments, my love," Floy said, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him, "we will die loving each other, the same as now."

Just then footsteps were heard, and a man was seen striding along toward the ledge.

Both Floy and Jerry uttered a cry of joy, for the coming man was none other than Deadwood Dick, Jr., alive and well!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE.

DICK soon reached the ledge, and his hands were eagerly grasped and shaken by both Floy and Jerry.

"Oh! we are so glad to see you!" Floy said; "ain't we, Jerry?"

"You bet we are!" Jerry responded, earnestly.

"And I am equally glad to see you," Dick replied, "but sorry to see this hero who saved my life so badly bungled up."

"Saved your life?" echoed Floy. "Did Jerry save your life?"

"He did, Miss Fydel. The night I was lynched, it was he who fixed the noose about my neck, in such a way that the knot came against my jaw-bone, and I was not strangled. He whispered to me to feign death, and I did so. When the crowd had dispersed, Mr. Justice came and cut me down, and thus delivered me from death. My gratitude to him will never cease."

"But, how about the ghost, and the footprints, Mr. Deadwood?"

"The ghost racket was simply a scare got up to create a sensation and divert suspicion from myself in the character of Mehetable Muggins, the part of the spook being played by a fellow whom I hire for that purpose."

"As for the Fatal Footsteps the imprints were made by me, in my disguise of Muggins. By special agreement I had the invention manufactured for the very purpose for which it has been used. The sole of the shoe making the imprint is an inking-pad. Inside the shoe, but in no way interfering with the foot, is a little reservoir containing crimson fluid, at the bottom of which is a tiny spring valve, to the handle of which was attached a string, communicating with one of my pockets. By pulling this string the pad was saturated sufficiently to make the imprint, but immediately absorbed the liquid, so that no after imprint was made."

"A clever invention," observed Jerry. "But how about the singular death of Loggerhead? Do you know anything about that?"

"Yes. In my character of Mehetable I shot the man, myself, to save the life of Joe Garry, whom he was about to murder. In a pocket of my dress I carried a powerful air-istol, which I could noiselessly discharge, sending a bullet with as much velocity as a revolver. By taking proper aim, I could kill a number of people without any one being the wiser for it."

"Of course I shall probably have to answer for Loggerhead's life at some future time, but I could not bear to see him knife Joe Garry. And it was the same way in the case with you and Giles Goff!"

"What?" and Jerry leaped forward excitedly.

"You don't mean to say that you shot Goff?"

"Plumb through the pulsometer. If I hadn't he would have filled you full of bullet-holes, the next instant. I couldn't see that, you know—not much!"

"Thank God! Then, I am not a murderer?"

"Of course not! But, it would be hard to make some people down yonder believe that."

Mayor Goff offers ten thousand dollars for you, dead or alive."

"So Floy has been telling me."

"Ah! has she? Well, Mr. Justice, I have come to earn that reward."

Both Jerry and Floy started in consternation at this announcement, but Dick's merry laugh relieved their momentary anxiety. "You needn't get scared," he said. "I ain't sailin' on that tack, just at present. I came here on another matter of business, you see?"

"What is it?" Jerry asked, excitedly.

"Well, I will tell you. Both gangs of men at the Majestic Mine have quit work again until you are reinstated. They are guarding the mouth of the mine, to prevent other help from being introduced. They furthermore declare that no more work shall be done in the mine, until Graham Goff is forced to leave the gulch. The men are all well armed, and ready to fight at a moment's notice, for possession of the gulch. What they want is a commander, to lead them on."

"Joe Garry is at present at their head, but they seem rather to lack confidence in his ability as a commander."

"I had an interview with Joe, (in disguise, of course) before coming here. He said he had called a meeting, told them I was alive, and laid my case, as regards the ownership of the pocket, before them."

He then asked if I should reappear, and lead them to a victorious routing of Goff and his allies, if they would recognize my rights, on the conditions that were that I should give them employment and fifteen per cent advance in wages, and make their working hours eight instead of ten, for a day."

"They held a consultation and seemed to favor the idea, but had two stipulations to make. One was, that I should hunt you up and bring them a letter of approval and recommendation from you. The second was, that I should reappoint you general superintendent of the Majestic Mine and all other mining interests, and that no miners should be employed by me who were not members of the Protective Union. Then they would recognize my rights to the ownership of the property, and, as their employer, would stick by me through thick and thin."

"Joe asked me if I thought I could find you, and I told him I could, and here I am."

"And it is my indorsement that will secure for you your rights?"

"Providing we are victorious in the struggle."

"There's no question about that. What is Mayor Goff doing?"

"Rushing about and getting together all the men he can. He is said to be offering big prices to all who will stand by him."

"Can he get many to help him?"

"Yes. I think, when it comes to the tug of war, the forces will be about evenly divided up. But of course the miners are the best and most able-bodied company of men, and are the best armed, too. When it comes to fight, they will be there every time!"

"Oh! Jerry, you will give your approval, won't you, now?" queried Floy, giving him a little hug.

"Indeed! I don't know about that!" Jerry replied, with mock seriousness. "Pray, how are you interested in the matter?"

"Because, then we can get married, and live here in the pocket, and have a nice little home and oh! it will be so nice!"

"Well, if I had a heart of adamant, I fancy I could hardly resist your plea," Jerry replied, good naturedly. "Besides, leaving you entirely out of the question, I would be worse than a brute to refuse anything that would favor my friend, Deadwood Dick. It's all right, Dick. We'll start at once for the pocket, and we'll paint the town as red as a turkey gobbler's wattle."

"Haden't you better stop here—you and Floy?" Dick asked, anxiously. "It will hardly be safe for the young lady down there."

"Oh! I'll look out for her!" Jerry replied.

"Shall we start at once?"

"Yes. I have three horses below here, for I presumed I should find you both here."

So they lost no delay, in starting.

In five minutes they were in the saddle, and riding down the mountain-side.

In half an hour, they reached the pocket bottom, and galloped away toward the mouth of the shaft of the Majestic Mine.

When the assembled miners saw that Jerry Justice was one of the trio, they swung their hats in the air, and sent up a rousing cheer of welcome, that fairly made the earth tremble.

In a few moments the trio drew rein, and

were immediately and eagerly surrounded by the motley horde of miners.

Of course Dick at once became an object of great curiosity. The majority of the miners had seen him lynched, and could not comprehend how he had escaped death.

Scores of men crowded around Jerry, and shook him warmly by the hand.

Finally, Jerry arose in his stirrups, and addressed the assemblage:

"Men of Whiskyville: I am proud to see you have struck, because you have honored me by showing the regard you had for me. I am proud also to learn that you propose to bounce Graham Goff, and restore to this noble fellow, Deadwood Dick, his legal rights. You are all as brothers to me, and we will fight side by side, until our aim is accomplished!"

Cheers!

"This gentleman, Deadwood Dick, as fearless and whole-souled a fellow as ever lived, will lead you to victory, and will treat you white, afterward. He agrees to advance your wages, 15 per cent, and also accept your other stipulations in every particular. And I, Jerry Justice, do heartily recommend and endorse him. And now, boys, three rousing cheers for our new leader and employer, Deadwood Dick!"

And the three hundred throats fairly made the hills ring, as they gave the cheers.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

AFTER the cheering had abated, Dick, Jerry and Floy dismounted, and the latter was conducted to a temporary place of safety in the engine house.

Outside, Dick was introduced severally to the men of the mine, and shook hands until his wrist was sore.

The reception accorded him was far more hearty than he had anticipated, or had any reason to expect.

After the handshaking he made a neat little speech, and thanked them for the fraternal way in which they had received him, and assured them that he should lead them unflinchingly forward to drive the opposition party from the field, and after the struggle was over, and victory achieved, he should deal with them in a kindly, just and considerate manner, and should regard them as his equals irrespective of nationality, social and financial station, or creed.

His speech evidently created a deep impression, for it was received with repeated cheers.

A consultation was then held between Garry, Jerry, Dick and a few other prominent strikers, in regard to the first plan of action.

A guard on duty on top of the stamp-mill, near at hand, soon reported that the mayor's party, numbering about two hundred and fifty men were marching to and fro, in the main street of the camp, and were being drilled by the mayor himself.

Dick immediately ordered his men to fall into line, equipped with their weapons, so that he could review them.

This was done, and though they were a rough and shaggy-bearded set of mortals, they were all of fine physique, and looked fitted for a tough campaign.

He put them through a series of military tactics, and was surprised to see that the most of them had "been there before," some of them being veterans of the late rebellion.

"Gentlemen," he said, as he passed along and dressed the line, "I am proud of you. A stancher lot of men never stood in line in Arizona. We are going to win the day, and sweep oppression from this beautiful mountain vale. To successfully accomplish this all we require is steady nerve, unswerving courage, and discipline. I am here to command you, and shall expect to be obeyed. Right about! Face toward the camp!"

The order was obeyed, and executed with a military precision that was admirable.

Dick was highly gratified.

He had appointed Jerry and Joe Garry his lieutenants, at either wing of the file.

"Rest arms, boys!" he ordered, "and remain where you are. It is not going to be long before we hear from the enemy, I'll wager!"

And he was right. It was not more than half an hour, when a horseman rode out of the "city," toward the position of the strikers.

He was mounted on a fine horse, and as he drew nearer it was observed that he was attired in the gorgeous uniform of a general of the German Army!

He also carried a flag of truce.

The man was no one else than Graham Goff!

The men of Dick's line began to roar with laughter, when they perceived how gorgeously their late employer was togged out, but Dick's stern order of silence soon quieted them down.

Dick then vaulted into the saddle and rode forward to meet Goff.

Although ununiformed, the handsome young commander of the strikers never looked to better advantage, and the miners would have needed only a word to have sent up a rousing cheer.

Dick and Graham Goff soon drew rein within a few feet of one another.

Goff surveyed the other for a moment, with a supercilious air, making no show of recognition.

"Well, sir, who are you?" he finally demanded.

"If it will not be taxing your memory too much, you may recollect that we have met once before. I am Richard Bristol, Deadwood Dick Junior in proper person."

"Do you represent the commander of yonder passel of fools?"

"I am commander of that body of miners, sir."

"Then, sir, as mayor of this city and owner of most of the property interests here, I order you to take your men and leave at once, or there will be bloodshed."

"And as sole and legal owner of this pocket, and all that appertains thereto, I order you to take yourself and all the people in this pocket, whom you do not see in my lines, and depart from here within half an hour's time, or we will sweep you off the face of the earth. That is all!"

And wheeling his horse, Dick cantered back toward the stamp-mill.

Goff glared after him a moment, his face almost livid with rage; then, wheeling about, he galloped back into town.

When Dick returned to his men, he found them impatiently awaiting him.

"Well, when are we going to get a chance to sail in and do 'em up?" demanded Jerry Justice, who, smarting from the wrongs he had endured and the wounds he had received the previous night, was ripe and ready for a fight.

"I can tell better, later," Dick replied. "I want to see if Goff is not going to make an attack on us. If not, we will ou him, although, with the buildings for protection, they have the bulge on us."

Just at this juncture there came a scream from the engine-house, where Floy Fydehl had been left.

"Stay where you are, boys, and stand ready for instant duty!" shouted Dick, and away he sped toward the engine-house.

Notwithstanding the order given, Jerry Justice followed close at his heels, and no one could censure him, even if it was a breach of discipline.

Both Dick and he bounded into the engine-house at about the same moment.

Then they saw the cause of the scream.

Two young women were engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand conflict, and in a literal sense the fur was flying at a great rate.

The combatants were none other than Floy Fydehl and Georgie Goff.

It took but a moment for Dick and Jerry to part them, Dick taking charge of the mayor's daughter, while Jerry held back his affianced; but although separated, the two girls glared at each other fiercely.

"What the blazes is the matter here?" Dick demanded, facing Georgie around toward him.

"How did you come here, young woman?"

"That's none of your business!" was the defiant retort.

"But I reckon it is. Ah! I recognize you now. You're the clerk at the Howling Hornet. We have met before, if I mistake not. How comes it you two young women were fighting?"

"None of your business, I tell you! Let me go!"

"Oh, no; not at this stage of the game. You were sent here by your royal progenitor to spy upon us, or for some other villainous purpose, and until the battle is over we shall have to hold you in durance vile!"

"Jerry, see if you can find some strong cord, while we bind this estimable guerrilla!"

"I have some cord in my pocket," Jerry said, coming forward.

Georgie struggled desperately against being bound, but it was no use. The two men were too much for her, and she was soon securely tied, hand and foot, and seated upon a box.

"There! you look ten per cent. better in that pose than when in a Sullivan attitude," Dick averred with a laugh.

"Oh! I'll get even with you all yet!" was the retort. "I really came here of my own accord to kill the three of you, and I'll do it yet."

"Just before you're going to do it, let us know, so we can be there!" Dick suggested. "You keep watch of her, Miss Fydehl, and if she gets too boisterous, box her ears a bit. Come, Jerry!"

"To arms!" came a cry, from out of doors. "Here! they come!"

Dick and Jerry made a rush to the front, and saw that the alarm was not a false one; Graham Goff and his men were coming, double-quick time, and in anything but regular order, too.

"Stand firm, boys!" cried Deadwood Dick, in a clear resonant voice. "Take steady aim, and when I give the word blaze away!"

On came the enemy, at a swift run, carrying their guns ready to fire, when closer proximity was gained and Goff gave the order.

But, Goff's eyes did not measure space, like those of his rival and there was where he made his fatal error.

He had not thought it time to give the order, yet, when Dick cried out to his men:

"Steady aim, boys! FIRE!"

Instantly a chain of flame leaped from the rifles of the miners, and leaden messengers sped on their deadly mission.

The volley was terribly destructive, full half of the attacking party fell, and among the lot was Graham Goff.

This sudden thinning of their ranks completely demoralized the remainder of the party, many of whom were strangers, and turning, they fled for dear life.

Joe Garry and a detachment of Dick's men gave chase, and the fleeing and terror stricken men were driven out of the pocket, never to return.

The battle was indeed a victory, and once more Deadwood Dick was monarch of that which was by legal right his own.

And with a brave body of men at his back, it seemed as if his troubles ought to have really ended; he certainly had earned a season of peace. But, 'tis an old say that no one can tell what a day may bring forth.

Our story is nearly at an end. A few words will tell all that remains to be told.

In a week after the battle, the miners had resumed work, and things began to pick up again, although there were many deserted dwellings and business places.

As Dick had decided, Joe Garry had a monopoly of the hotel and saloon business in the pocket; so the Howling Hornet, and several saloons and dance-houses were razed, leaving Joe monarch of all he surveyed, in his particular line.

Jerry Justice resumed his position as mine superintendent, to the infinite satisfaction of all the miners.

Georgie Goff was released, on her promise to leave the camp and never return. What money was found on her father's remains was given her. The unworthy father and dissolute son, were buried side by side.

The Chicago lawyer came on, in due time, and Floy Fydehl received her little fortune, but of course it made no change in her love for Jerry, and they were soon afterward married.

Under Deadwood Dick's regime, the camp grew and prospered, wonderfully, and new enterprises were permitted to be started, Dick receiving a certain royalty. No miners could get work in the gulch, however, except they joined the miners' union.

Finally, the question arose, of giving the camp a new name, as Whiskyville wasn't quite the thing, but no name was decided on, until, one evening, the three hundred employees of the Majestic Mine, waited upon their employer, and, as a token of their friendship and esteem, presented him with a magnificent gold-mounted revolver, the handle and barrel of which were studded with diamonds.

After making a felicitous speech of thanks, Dick added:

"Boys, your kind and valuable token of appreciation, has suggested to me an idea. We will call our place Pistol Pocket!"

And from that time on, as Pistol Pocket the camp was known.

THE END.

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